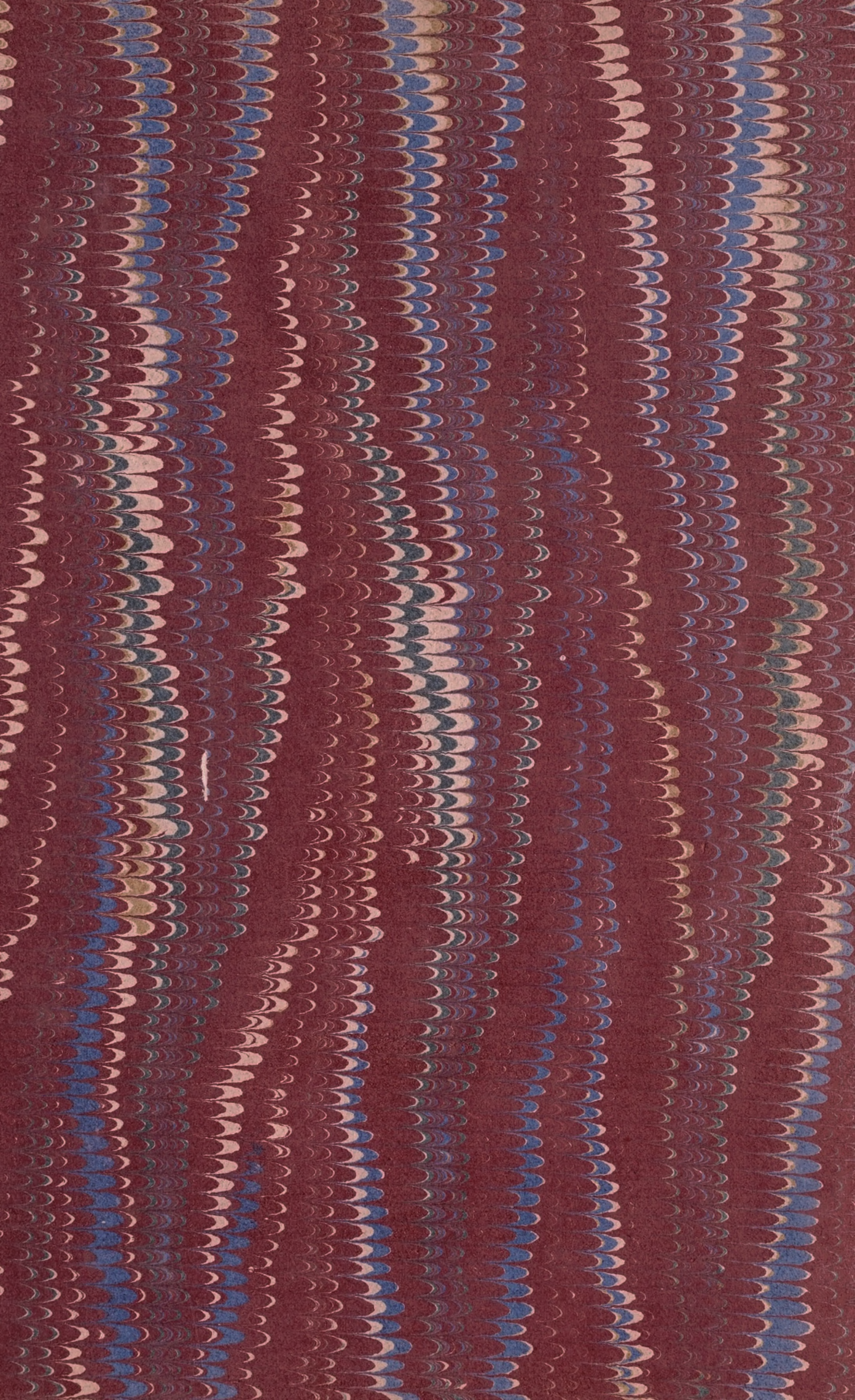


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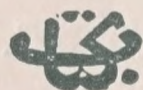
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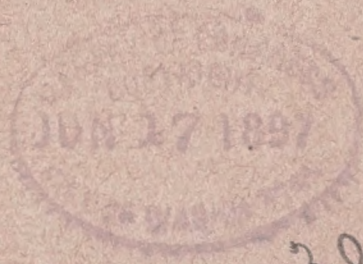
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JOHN KING, MANAGER.

A STORY OF THE STAGE.

✓ BY ✓

✓ EDMOND NOLCINI AND GRANT EMMONS. ✓



NEW YORK:

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*Connerville
Mass.*

John King, Manager.

A STORY OF THE STAGE.

QUOTATIONS FROM THE BOOK.

"THOSE wounds heal that men do give themselves."

"Something ached in the desolate young heart, flung out to the world without a protecting arm, or any close, particular love; the woman in her felt weak; she longed for a moment to cast herself down, even as Dorée had done, if, in the fall, she might find a broad bosom like a shield, and the true heart, like a citadel."

"I will commence to build myself anew in answer to every desire of your sweet womanhood; you are the one pure planet of my heart that has not set."

"He was like a volcano clothed in snow, one could never calculate the moment of the flood and the outburst; she would not be shielded and protected, she would be pushed and dominated; she would be burned to a skeleton by that force of ardor which inspired and moved him on to the accomplishment of all his purposes, and then she would be cast out of his inner life, and floated away in the cold and mighty drift of his indifference."

"Oh, Alice! Alice! it is dark," he sobbed, "*we have erred, and strayed from thy ways.*"

JOHN KING, MANAGER.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN John King came into this world he was as a precious jewel, firmly fixed in the rich settings of an eminently respectable life.

His mother, having descended in the Edwards line from an old puritanical stock, was a woman of unbending principles and fanatical religious faith. When she was but fourteen years of age, she united with the orthodox church, where she remained a faithful member to the day of her death.

She married, however, outside the congregation, John's father being a Quaker, yet she had no cause to regret this action, although they could never quite agree upon matters of religion.

Each quietly maintained his course without much comment upon the subject of their unutterable convictions.

Of the two, the husband proved the most amenable to reason whenever a discussion arose between them on the contested points of their particular beliefs.

It accordingly happened that when their child came into the world, John King, Sr. surrendered the care of his soul to the mother with the dry comment, "he may hearken entirely to thy counsel, Mary, and look somewhat to my ways, in matters of religion; for

surely, if by following my ways he should escape Heaven, with thy voluble expounding of the Scriptures, he cannot justly get into Hell." Half heartily she responded to the speech? "Nay, John, not if he listens well and heed what the good elders of our church have studied so deeply to discover; but verily, none be so deaf as those that won't hear."

The first great trial of John King's life loomed upon him in that hour when he was taught to pray. His mother who undertook the task, after the nurse had reported her bad proceedings with the boy, came into his room one night, and lifting him from the crib, stood him on the floor before her. "John," she commanded somewhat sternly, "get down at once upon your little knees." John stuck his baby fingers between his lips and stood looking up into his mother's face grieved and defiant. All measures were used to reduce the young rebel to holy submission, who first manifested his will and lack of reverence on this occasion. Finally, the most desperate remedy for a stubborn spirit was brought into requisition, namely, a wooden paddle, which was applied somewhat vigorously to John's bare back, horizontal. This had the effect of bringing a copious flood of tears which seemed to float the stumbling words through a perfect storm of sobs.

"Please Dod, bless Sally and the pig."

Sally was his nurse, and the pig, his entertainment three times a day, when Sally took him kindly out to the pen to see the animal fed.

At ten, John was as much admired for his intelligence as the grace and spirit of his deportment, whenever he was permitted to see and to enter into conversation with the ladies and gentleman who visited his father's house. Although he was rather tall and slender for his age, he had thus early commenced to develop a fullness of the chest, and a

squareness of the shoulders, which, taken in connection with the erectness of his carriage, gave a manly appearance to his boyish figure.

His face was rather thin, with something in the keen, sharp glance of his gray-blue eyes, the breadth of his forehead, the varying expressions which flashed over his features, which suggested a play of lightning behind the summer clouds.

He had a way when opposed, of dropping his head forward until his chin rested upon his bosom, when he would give the offender a long, slanting, sidewise look from beneath his frowning brows; with his teeth set and his lips drawn into a hard line which spoke volumes for the defiance of his spirit and the firmness of his will. Fortunately for his success in life and the power that he manifested to shake and rule so many destinies beside his own, the heavy qualities of his nature were enlivened by a keen sense of humor, a quickness of repartee, and a kind, even affectionate disposition.

At a very early age, John King, Jr. evinced such powers of mimicry that his parents, condemning all levity in the character of their son which might lead him to the godless representations of the stage, removed from his observation all suggestions of such a life.

When John was but five years old, his nurse revealed to him one day a new world which lay beautifully bound in leather and gold upon the library shelves. From that day he gave her no peace until he was taken into the library every morning, where he insisted that the copies of the old books should be opened before him on a Turkish rug which covered the centre of the floor. Here he would lie for hours upon his stomach, entranced by their contents; his little red-stockinged legs kicked up over his back, and waving to and fro like a couple of black-knobbed

stamens thrust out of a furbelow of his white skirts and starched pinafore. With a face flushed and eager, and his chubby fingers grasping the stiff, yellow pages, he would insist upon explanations as to why Juliet mourned and Satan fell.

Sally spelled out the words slowly beneath the pictures, making such explanations as she thought proper, and soon the child could repeat by heart all that she had taught him.

The power of analogy, which was very early developed in John's little head, led him to discover at length, in a small statuette that stood upon the library mantle, a reproduction of an engraving in one of the books.

"See, Sally," he cried in hysterical childish glee, "it's 'Omeo on mamma's shelf."

"Why so it is," declared the stupid Sally, who had never thought of it before, "la ! how bright the young un's gettin' ; sure and he'll be bustin' his hid wid too much thinkin ! I must take the buks away from him. John," she continued, "give the buks to Sally, like a little man ; you're gettin' too larned for your age."

But John held on to the covers of the book with such determination that Sally, who feared she might tear the leaves, fell to expostulating.

"Now Johnnie, like a little man, let Sally have the buk ; if you don't you'll get wather in your brain instid of sinse and grow foolish instid of wise ; then you'll die, and go to Purgatory, most like ; or ye'll sit in the corner all yer life, as Kate's baby did ; a sucking yer little thumbs."

"Gif me pictures on the shelf, Sally."

"Holy smote ! that bes no picture at all, but a statute ; and it is not me that'll be afther laying a finger on it for yes."

John got upon his feet in childish wrath ; he stamped upon the floor.

"I will have it, Sally ; it's my Mamma's 'omeo," and, in an unguarded moment he lost his old possessions ; as Sally took this opportunity to seize the book and thrust it out of sight. In contempt of these proceedings, with that quick readiness to see the point of advantage which never quite deserted him through all his later career, he climbed quickly into a chair that happened to stand beneath the mantel, and before Sally could prevent him, he had seized Romeo by one leg. Sally turning from the book case gave a scream ; John started fearfully backward, lost his balance, and the child and statue came down in a general crash, where the former aroused the household with his cries of rage, and pain, and the later, stately lovers, lay scattered in ruins about him, like a fatal prophecy of his life.

At twelve John proved such an annoyance to the governess employed for home instruction, it was determined to send him to a private school kept by an orthodox clergyman by the name of Patterson.

King's parents having designed him for the ministry, a profession which by nature he was the least qualified to fill, the rigid denial of the free exercise of his mind in channels that would have produced a healthy developement of its most noble faculties, was cramped by a denial of pleasure common to youth, and thus embittered by a solemn and bigoted education.

They were not made of that malleable stuff which could be moulded by a boy's will. The more wayward his impulses, the more determined they became to fashion his mind by the unbending principles of religion into that solemn and holy character, befitting the profession to which they had unitedly dedicated him.

He was accordingly sent to Mr. Patterson's school, he being a man who added to his renown for piety

the reputation of a strict disciplinarian. It thus happened that, followed by his father's counsel and his mother's prayers and tears, John entered the Patterson school at the age of thirteen. It was a journey of some fifty miles from the old homestead ; so that John was denied the pleasure of frequent home visits ; thus the first links which bound the boy to old ties and kindred, was early broken. That he might feel less lonely on the way, his father and mother accompanied him the entire journey and so personally supervised his proper establishment in the school.

John's introduction to Mr. Patterson passed with no further comment than that he should receive a goodly and Godly education. With more tears on separating from his parents, who left him with many carefully considered admonitions as to what he should and should not do, John was put to bed in company with a plump little fellow of twelve, who began by staring at him with big, round blue eyes, and ended by making himself disgustingly familiar with all his possessions.

The boys of the school when they met in the classroom, ranged from the ages of eleven to seventeen. John King made himself popular with the elder portion of the school, and became a sort of leader and director of the younger members of it. From first to last he was not a favorite with Mr. Patterson, who endeavored to treat the boy with justice, but ever manifested toward him a cold and dignified formality he believed to be necessary to hold in check a certain freedom which strongly characterized his speech and manner.

His keen appreciation of a practical joke, and the recklessness which led him to engage in any daring scheme, and contrived to upset the law and order of the school, soon brought him into bad repute in the estimation of its master. Hence, it happened within

sixteen months, the secret antagonism of their natures was openly betrayed in a quarrel.

The result of a stormy interview with his teacher was John's arrival at home upon the following day.

"John," said his father seriously, after sorrowfully greeting the boy. "Thy mother and I have been greatly concerned about thee ; as from several letters written by thy pious instructor, it appeareth thou hast carried thyself in a high and ungodly fashion at school."

Whereupon John commenced to pour his complaints into the sympathetic ears of his mother, making so strong a case against Mr. Patterson that she conceived herself to be grossly insulted in the person of her son.

"Poor child," she commenced, with an odd stiffening and whitening of her features, so observable in her son when struggling to repress an exhibition of strong excitement.

"Did you have no sauce upon the table, love, for tea?"

"Never fear, John, if thou art a trifle thin, a change of pasture maketh a fat calf ; and thou wilt at once be well sauced and goosed by thy mother's kindly hand. Yet I would admonish thee that unless thou settest thy head upon some plan of life, thou wilt not, like a fragrant herb, bloom in the garden of thy mother's heart, but grow as a poisonous nettle, bestowing upon all the woman's anxious love the smart and sting of thy misbehavior.

"With thy mother's consent, thou shalt have for two years the bent of thy will, unless it run to extravagance in living or lateness of hours or ungodly sports. At the end of such time, thou and I shall have some friendly talk together concerning thy future. There, lad ! thou hast nothing to frown about,

look up and give thine old father thy hand on the contract."

John gave both hands to his father, his face lightening into a sort of radiance, which eloquently pronounced his relief from expected rebuke, since the closing remarks had softened and atoned for the slight censure manifested at the commencement of the monologue. Rushing from his father, he seized his mother's head in his arms, and hugged it tight against his shoulder, brushing his cheek caressingly against her yet bright auburn hair.

"And thou, mother?" he queried, using, as he occasionally did, the grave quaker dialect. "What sayest thou, dear, to my father's promise?"

"That I do not fully approve it," she managed to articulate with some difficulty, from the cause of her lips being muffled by their hard pressure against his shoulder.

"Let me go, John;" she continued to gently struggle to extricate herself. But he held her as before, saying: "Nay, nay, mother, listen to my heart, and answer me kindly, surely my father knows me better than thou dost, and is a wise man."

"Thou art a foolish lad," she managed to say, at length getting free of the embrace, and putting up her thin, ladylike hands to brush back her ruffled hair.

"To give you your liberty as thy father has just now done, is like letting a young colt out of the pasture. I cannot quarrel with thy father's purpose, but be sure, John, that so long as thou remainest a child beneath my roof, for my own part I shall shirk no responsibility concerning you, because you are strong in the rein and hard on the bit."

John King, Sr., rose from his chair, turning his back upon his wife as he walked to the window, where he struggled to subdue that inner disturbance of his feel-

ings which in their lives together had occasionally arisen, when, in an instance like the present, he had to encounter the opposition of a dogmatic will.

Mrs. King resumed her knitting; the silence between the three for a few seconds being broken only by the sharp clinking of her needles. Then John King, Sr., turned around with a sly twinkle of humor in his gray eyes.

"Well, Mary!" he smiled pleasantly, "if thou and the boy have settled it between thee, I will leave you to fight it out together."

CHAPTER II.

DURING the two years while John remained home on probation, he made some progress in the study of literature, and displayed such aptitude in scribbling that his father was led to believe his son might enter with some credit upon a literary career.

It is so easy while sitting sheltered by the home fire-side to imagine what one can do, or what one's children may do or become out in the great world. Perhaps it is well that the aspirant for worldly place and distinctions sees the successes but not the risk to be incurred when entering upon any line of life beset with competition, and requiring great experience in all its details to bring the individual to any degree of prominence.

However, John scribbled with a mind set toward journalism. His work displayed the practical bent of his intellect and so related to history, science, recent discoveries and current events. The library became inundated with sheets of reasons why archaeology and

geology had not established in fact the beginning of man : Or why the currency question must continue to be a troublesome problem until some new financial system should be discovered to regulate it according to the supply and demand. Most of the stuff he wrote was worthless, but the scales were before the eyes of the ambitious logician and his enamored parents. He was by the end of the second year grown to the full stature of a man, having developed the bass note in his voice, and a shade of down was just appearing upon his upper lip, and the smooth peachy sides of his fair face.

He was what his boyhood promised, exceedingly good looking in person and rather frank and winning in his manners. As he grew older, however, he manifested a little less humor and more dignity in his behavior. At this period of his life, his character seemed to have developed that steadiness which made him appear a very promising young man.

It was June, the library windows were open, and Mrs. King with her maid in tow, each armed with brooms and dust brush, with their heads tightly bandaged in aprons, marched through the house searching for the invisible speck. . . . John came in from the garden with a bunch of Baltimore Belles in his hand, that he proceeded to arrange in a green vase that decorated one corner of the mantelpiece. It was not sufficiently satisfactory to his artistic sense that they were roses whose fragrance filled the room, he stood pulling up one stem and thrusting down another so as to make the most harmonious display of their beauty, when his father entered the room where he stood some moments watching his son's manœuvres.

"Thou hast something of the woman in thee, lad," he finally remarked.

"It is not a bad element, is it, father?" responded the son. Without heeding the question he proceeded

to deliver himself of the matter uppermost in his thoughts.

"I have something to tell thee that may please thee, my boy."

John turned about looking earnestly in his father's face.

"I have written my cousin, Alice Beecham, concerning thee ; she is accounted, I believe, to have some art with her pen, and I thought perhaps she might put thee in the way of thy desires."

"Thank you, sir," responded John warmly, "you could have done nothing that would suit me better."

"Come here, lad, and sit down ; we will talk it over between us and then refer it to thy mother, who at last being satisfied that thou dost not care to preach, may be willing to see thee embarked in some other honorable and prosperous career."

"Thy cousin Alice," continued the old gentleman, when they were seated together, "is a young woman of exceptional character and assured position as the wife of a prosperous Boston banker. Her home and influence will afford some privileges which could not otherwise be obtained ; and she has, upon the strength of my correspondence and some of thy work which I filched to send her, John, already signified her interest so far as to get the engagement upon a small magazine."

"It is excellent, sir !" responded John, with such enthusiasm as to leave no doubt in his father's mind regarding the satisfaction this news gave him.

John King, eager to rush in upon so inviting a prospect as the present opportunity promised, set out immediately for his cousin's house in Boston, where he arrived in due time at the station and was safely delivered by the cabman at the door of the imposing Beecham mansion on Beacon Street.

He was told by Mrs. Beecham's servants that the

lady of the house was out but would presently return, whereupon he was ceremoniously ushered into the magnificent mansion of the Beecham's.

John felt immediately impressed by new surroundings which so greatly contrasted in its display of wealth with the appearance of quiet grandeur in which he had been bred.

The windows were curtained with costly satin, behind which floated the gaudy texture of the most delicate lace.

There was in the carpets and furniture an almost gorgeous effect of blue and gold, which extended to the arch doorways of the music room and library. John, who had never seen his father's cousin Alice, formed a very imposing idea of the mistress of such a mansion. He imagined that he must offer her some very grave and elaborate account of his appearance in her house before he was expected.

He seated himself somewhat gingerly in the springy depths of one of the chairs to await her arrival. As he sat thinking he began to speak the words softly, that he might hear how they would impress a listener.

He had about concluded the form of his reception speech, when a folding door was pushed open behind him, and a low browed madonna faced woman stood in the entrance, which evidently opened from this room into the conservatory, as her black robed figure and the ivory whiteness of her face and hands seemed cut out out sharply against the green background of growing shrubs and flowers.

"This is?" she inquired with deliberate speech, and clear cut musical cadence.

"John King, madam; Mrs. Beecham's cousin," he replied rising, and blushing as he bowed himself before her.

"I am Mrs. Beecham," she answered. "You must pardon my unavoidable neglect of you, Cousin John."

I really had an important engagement, that could not be very well postponed ; and then, my poor lad, I have had the bad grace to forget the hour of your arrival : but if I can be pardoned, I will endeavor to atone in the future for my short comings in point of cousinly favors. Please be seated, John. I have a friend in the conservatory to whom I would like to introduce you directly."

As she made this statement she sat down, taking care to arrange her skirts properly, indicating at the same time by a wave of her hand a corner of the *satin tête-à-tête*, which he should occupy at her side.

John, who had ever been dominant in all previous situations, now encountered a very oppressive air of culture and refinement in the person of his beautiful cousin, that rendered him at once self conscious and so awkward ; he tripped against a *jardinière* which happened to be standing near the *tête-à-tête*, as he attempted to seat himself upon it.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mrs. Beecham, I feel like a clown," he blurted out frankly, blushing more furiously than before.

"Don't begin the acquaintance by abusing yourself ; I assure you I am prepared to pardon much in a young man toward whom I have the most cousinly intentions to be kind."

This speech delivered in a tone of light banter, was far from reinstating John, who had fallen for the first time in his own estimation, and was greatly distressed to find himself so ruled and disconcerted by a person who was scarcely more than a stranger, although connected by ties of blood and bound to him by promises of friendship. Conscious that she was regarding him somewhat quizzically ; he had no doubt that she thought him a "cad," with whom she would be exceedingly bored. The reflection only served to increase his confusion. Alice Beecham, without appearing to

notice how her presence affected him, began to make kind inquiries concerning his father and mother and the manner of his life at home. Two things made a lasting impression upon John's imaginative mind at this first interview. For a long time they were the significant emblems of her life. They were the heavy jet cross suspended upon her bosom by a narrow guard of black velvet, and a white ascension lily lying in her lap, looking as if it were engraved against the blackground of her dress, the green stem lightly resting in fingers almost as delicate as the waxy petals of the flower.

Quite frequently, as she talked with him, she would turn her face toward the conservatory, as if anticipating the appearance in the drawing room of some person or persons whom they could plainly hear moving about among the plants. All at once two men came into the line of vision ; the low murmur of their voices shaped into audible speech caused John to turn instinctively toward them. One of them was a gentleman of Mrs. Beecham's age ; he was evidently engaged in discussing the qualities of some plant he held in his hand with the other, who looked like a gardener, when catching the inviting look of his hostess, he smilingly nodded to his companion and entered the room. Mrs. Beecham arose. John followed her example.

"John King," she said, fixing her eyes intently upon the face of the gentleman as he approached them ; "this is our rector, Mr. Astor."

For the first time in his life, John King felt the presence of great and godlike virtue in a man. He perceived in this man such an assemblage of rare qualities impressed upon the clear cut and clean-shaven features that he could not well describe them ; but there seemed to emanate from the rector's strong, quiet face, a beauty which transformed his firm lips

into lines of light when he smiled. There was something magnetic and gentle in his greeting of the young man, whose hand he grasped warmly in his own, searching his face with tender inquiry.

"It is my cousin, Mr. Astor," explained Mrs. Beecham, speaking of John, but still looking at the rector.

"Ah! I am happy to make the young man's acquaintance," then turning toward her, but still retaining his warm hold of John's hand, "does he belong to us, Mrs. Beecham?" he inquired.

"Well, well, John," smiled Mrs. Beecham, in half serious reproof, as she resumed her seat, "what shall I offer in defense of your father's quaker methods of sitting in the house of worship in silence; or your mother's, your dear, good mother's, habit of praying on her feet?"

Somehow John could not, little as he sympathized with it, bear the slightest fling of sarcasm at his mother's faith. He bridled a little in a boyish way.

"Mrs. Beecham, I have not studied these things too deeply I will allow, but my mother relies upon St. Paul, I believe, who does not accept the public prayers of woman."

Alice Beecham dropped her white eyelids, so that their black lashes swept the pale oval of her cheek. "My St. Paul has taught me to pray," she replied in a low, sweet voice. A moment of silence fell between them, during which the rector sat gazing out of the opposite window, grave and thoughtful.

After this day, John's life was for sixteen months like a long, sweet, tormenting dream. Introduced by Alice Beecham into the broad arena of a new existence, where superficial refinement had the effect of polishing his manner, and intellectual culture of broadening and deepening his powers of reflection and analysis, he saw the goal ahead and entered the

race ; but the object he ran for was beyond pursuit ; it lived in a boy's dream of all human perfection as embodied in the person and character of his cousin Alice. From his earliest years, John had associated the impulses of affection with all that was ennobling in nature ; the tender, self-sacrificing love of his father and mother, as manifested toward each other, and their combined efforts in furthering his own interests was a sort of a model upon which he erected his sense of attachment to others. To him Alice Beecham became that sweet, impossible ideal, to whom he dared not raise his eyes too boldly, although his soul was ever in a flame whose burning incense was fanned by the white wings of her affable presence in his thoughts. Day and night, night and day, in his dreams even, she visited him.

He worked very hard during the week and walked to church with Mrs. Beecham on Sunday. Here, from the beautiful Episcopal service, he received the strongest religious impressions of his life. He believed he had arrived at that point where his heart was offered in humble adoration to Almighty God, who alone can order the affections and govern the wills of unruly men. Instead, it was the sensuous magnificence and imposing church and church service that impressed him, the alluring and devotional nature of a woman he worshiped.

The hot blood would leap from his heart to his face, surging over it from brow to chin as he felt the thrilling touch of her hand upon his shoulder, the sweet scent of her warm breath upon his cheek, as she leaned gently forward to direct his attention to the prayers and responses they were to utter together. His religion, instead of presenting an abstract deity, represented nothing higher for his contemplation than the kneeling figure of the woman at his side, with her black robes trailing about her and her

saintly face bent upon her bosom. It was a holy picture shrined in the rich, warm shadows of the great church, he could never efface from memory. The sound of the fair penitent's voice in meek confession uttering the lines—

“We have erred and strayed from thy ways.”

What was it in her voice that always so strongly affected him as she uttered these words :

“We have erred and strayed from thy ways.” It seemed that the very spirit of repentance found expression in the sweet, pathetic intonation of the syllables falling from lips, whose sacred office was to heal, to bless, to soothe rather than to make passionate confessions to Heaven of sins and weaknesses which could not find any correspondence in her life and thought.

Inadvertently his eyes were attracted from the page, to covertly watch the motion of her lips, as he repeated the service after her, assuming the very expression of her face in unconscious sympathy ; feeling his full emotional nature stirred by the strongest religious sentiments, provoked by her poses as the central figure of all the grand and imposing scene that surrounded them. It was to her he looked for example, rather than to the God whom they both addressed ; to her he listened more attentively than to the rector. She typified the religion she professed, and standing between him and his God, he simply struggled after her to reach the heights of self abnegation and devotion he supposed she had attained.

It did not surprise John to observe that Alice Beecham's husband regarded her with a sort of veneration that bordered upon coldness and fear. Whenever John saw them together he could only liken her to some delicate lily denied the companionship of its kind, stripped of foliage, and pinned to a rough

granite block. Mr. Beecham was a shrewd, practical business man, with a touch of coarseness in his nature. It was evident that he was too much absorbed in the business concerns of life to enjoy his wife's excessive refinement and exalted religious fancies. He was something of a horse jockey, club man, and fashionable gambler ; that is, he dealt largely in stocks. He was but little seen in his own house, and when there often seemed like an awkward boy uncomfortably impressed by foreign surroundings.

"Go it, my lad ! I am glad that Alice has a companion to take her to and from prayers ; for myself, it is all too damned starched." He had once made this confession to John, at a time when he happened to have his speech limbered by free potations of wine ; but whatever his deficiencies of life and character might be, he was proud of his wife, whom he left to maintain the glory of their social position and to settle his account with Heaven. He paid her richly in money and all the pleasures, purchased of his hard experience with the world, for the tribute of her graceful petitions at the throne of Heaven in his behalf. It happened that she became a good deal identified with the rector in his work, and they were much in each other's society, conning over the problems of various charities that she undertook to carry out as his faithful militant. After a time John thought he detected the same emotions in operation in the young rector's mind as disturbed his own quiet. A tremulous hesitancy of speech ; a feverish flush or burning of the cheeks whenever he entered Mrs. Beecham's presence ; not as a bashful boy, but like a cautious man who is surprised by the mad rush of rebellious impulses over which he draws the steady rein of his determined will.

There were times when John saw them together, that he could but remark how cold and formal was

the rector's speech and bearing toward his charming friend and hostess. Still further it became evident to John, that in proportion as the rector manifested chilling reserve, Alice Beecham sacrificed somewhat the air of distance, and dignity natural to her, in order to maintain the losing ground which might keep her before his eyes as a mark of favor and attraction. She would find some excuse in their work together, which would bind his attention more closely to herself. She suddenly became helpless in matters of particular importance relating to her work, that required private tête-à-têtes, and a detailed analysis of the subject of their labor. Even when she passively took her orders, she was ever a sweet and winning woman ; but when she thus exerted herself to please, bringing as she did an infinite variety of qualities into play in the expression of her features and the charming grace of her attitudes, she became a maddening and tantalizing object to the susceptible fancy of a young man.

Slowly his altered views of her character began to see her as ambitious for place and power ; he also began to suspect that to Mrs. Beecham the rector was like a winning card in an important game ; she must hold him at any cost as a trump to be played for her own vain glory. It is true it required a sharp eye and clever wits to discover that the set of this proud woman's head displayed any passion for supremacy ; suggesting rather as it did in its poise the grace of humility. If she rejoiced to find herself exceptional and the centre of attraction, as she generally was, she was too thoroughbred to make the fact evident to aught but that jealous attention which John King bestowed upon every movement of her graceful body, every expression of her mobile features. To him she was unapproachable he knew, upon any except the loftiest side of her character, and that she could be

anything more or less to any other man rendered him furious. If, which he did not quite believe, she concealed beneath her ambition a secret thirst for adventure, he knew her refined instincts would not permit her to go into clogs to travel in forbidden paths, but that she would considerately 'pick her way in satin slippers.' With suspicion his impassive and beautiful ideal became passionate flesh at his feet. Still she looked upon him with such reproachful majesty in her strong, incorruptible womanhood, he dared not stoop to touch his lips to the object of his desire. After all he could not damn her on suspicion, neither could he wholly submit his judgment to the glamour of the old faith. Thus tormented by her image in an insecure position, his nights were blasted by feverish dreams, his days clouded with rebellious thoughts concerning her. There were times when he struggled to free his mind from its enslavement to these thoughts so fraught with misery, and to consider more entirely the hopes and ambitions of his future life. Although he had been but sixteen months engaged in journalistic work, Mrs. Beecham's social position had brought him into connection with many gifted and influential persons, who had kindly put out their hands to help the young man to the front. John's mind was always of that practical and analytical character which enabled him to grasp and to comprehend intricate problems; not of that higher order which deals with philosophy and religion; but he had a long, shrewd, managing business faculty, which led him into general criticism. In the office of a critic his theatrical reviews soon attracted so much attention that he was finally offered a leading position on the journal, where he was employed to devote his entire attention to the theatre and concert work. This familiarity with the stage led him to often consider his ability as a manager of some successful company. When his mind

became distracted with the affairs of his heart, he began to wonder if it would not be better to break the bonds of so hopeless a claim, and to throw himself soul and body into the excitement of a more adventurous life.

At length he commenced to realize that the loss of sleep and appetite in connection with the hard strain tension of an unceasing thought, was beginning to tell upon his strength and appearance. His eyes looked out of dark hollows and his cheeks were growing pale and thin. The mustache had thickened and grown upon his upper lip, and his brow had rescinded the fair promise of peace in the first lines of care traced across it. John King, with a more pronounced air of self-assurance and somewhat graver in manner, looked into the mirror one morning, to realize for the first time that something had gone out of his life forever: He was no longer a boy. About this time he received an invitation to go to New York, where he was offered a position on one of the great dailies, with an increase of salary. As had been his previous custom, his first impulse was to rush home and communicate the news to Mrs. Beecham, who had all along been like a star in the dark to lead him on to conquest. He sat at his desk in the office, holding the letter for some time in his hand, while engaged in speculating upon her possible opinion. Would she counsel him to go or to stay? Here was an opportunity which might not come again. She would see it, undoubtedly, and counsel him to go. He had no power to tear himself from the luxury of her house and presence. The thought even of absence from one who seemed the inseparable good of his life, made him desperate. With his usual decision, he threw his letter in the waste-basket, and politely declined the offer by the next mail.

In the meantime it was reported that Mr. Astor was about to resign his pastorate of his church and take orders in England. John took occasion to question Mrs. Beecham concerning the truth of this report, while sitting at the breakfast table one morning.

"Mrs. Beecham, have you heard anything about the rector's leaving us to take new orders? I suppose of course you have." Although John attempted to speak casually, the strong excitement of hope and curiosity made itself so apparent in this query, it attracted Mr. Beecham's attention. He could but notice that the young man, wholly disregarding his presence, was staring almost fiercely across the table as he waited for his answer with ill-concealed impatience. John alone, however, marked a change of color in Mrs. Beecham's face as she glanced up to meet his inquisitorial meaning, with no apparent recognition of the stormy passions brooding in the young man's breast.

"I have heard so," she replied, without a change of the sweet composure of her face.

"John, you asked the question tragically," sneered Mr. Beecham. "Are you interested in Mr. Astor so much, or do you suspect that Alice is?"

The lance he had thrust at her vulnerable spot had recoiled to his own injury.

"I am not quite well, I believe," he rejoined quickly, as he fixed his baffled gaze upon his plate.

"Sick people are generally tragic or foolish."

Alice Beecham leaned across the table with that intent meaning in her eyes he could feel even when he was not looking at her.

"You do look miserable, John, and you slight the offerings of the table; we must look into this matter of your not eating or sleeping, to discover the cause of it."

How did she know he did not sleep? He had never told her; he believed that she was well informed about the whole matter, that she had intended it from the first, that her subtle coquetry was like the beauty of some poisonous flower, attractive to the eye, alluring to the senses, but endowed with the power to inoculate with poison the veins of all those who dared to approach it too near. His nerves were upon the surface this morning, and so had been hit all around by Mr. Beecham's scathing speech.

"Oh, I am well enough," was his paradoxical remark, as he arose from the table. "But I have some extra work which requires my early attention at the office. Will you please excuse me?" With his watch in his hand he passed out of the room, having delivered this excuse with lips too nervous to shape the syllables correctly. He knew that Mr. Beecham would soon follow him. Hoping to get another word in private with Mrs. Beecham, he stepped into a little cloak-room upon the opposite side of the hall where he stood, impatiently awaiting his departure. Very soon he came into the hall talking to his wife in unguarded tone, supposing, as they both did, that John had left the house.

"Don't you think it would be well, Alice, to allow John King to change his location?"

As Mr. Beecham asked this question they stopped before the cloak stand near the door where John was standing within the room. Although Mrs. Beecham could not have been so obtuse as not to see and to comprehend what went on in John's mind concerning her, she affected to disregard its significance.

"Why, Henry, what do you mean? Has the boy done anything to offend you?" she inquired, with an expression of surprise in the deliberate, clear-cut intonations of her voice.

"No, not to displease me," he replied, with marked

emphasis. "I am speaking for John's sake, Alice ; he is no longer a boy, and it is quite apparent to me that he is in love with you."

A pale flush of anger stole into her cheeks, as she raised her head a little higher, looking at him more steadily and sternly.

"It is rather late, Henry, for you to manifest distrust of my conduct with young men. I have, hitherto, been left quite to my own course in life, and I do not think it has ever called for rebuke or reflected disgrace upon your name or house ; besides you should remember this boy is my cousin and ten years my junior."

Henry Beecham was sensible to the implied censure he received ; he could not bear such words from the lips of a woman whom he revered and respected more than he loved and protected.

"Oh, well," he laughed with an uneasy glance, "do as you like with your kid ; here, give me a lift with the arm of this coat." She commenced to assist him as he desired, and, when, by his "tugging" and her "hauling" they had gotten him comfortably settled in his outer garment, he turned with a careless "Thank you, my dear," dropping a hurried kiss upon her lips and left the house.

For a moment after her husband's departure, Alice Beecham stood as he had left her, with her chin and her upper lip pressed meditatively between her thumb and forefinger. John, who had been an unintentional listener to this interesting dialogue, was still struggling to gain that power of self-command which would enable him to speak to her with some show of composure. From his position in the cloak-room he could see the pale, classical profile shaded by the heavy masses of blue-black hair, and the lips thus compressed, like a thread of scarlet, somewhat scornfully drawn between the sharp outlines of her brow

and curving chin. What was she thinking as she stood there? God knows she looked a little cruel in this new attitude of retrospection. At length attracted by some subtle force emanating from the intensity of his thought, she looked over her shoulder and discovered him like a concealed foe spying the outworks of her intrenchments. She was but little pleased with this discovery, and betrayed it in the look of reproof and tone of annoyance manifested in her inquiry.

"Why, I thought you had gone out, John; how long have you been here!"

He came out slowly; his limbs trembling as though struck by the chill of an ice-box; his eyes like the blue heavens in a drought when there is a hot film of gray atmosphere under the sun; the rest of his features looked white and cold.

"Only a few minutes, Alice. I hope you will understand I did not wish to listen, but having heard I must say that Mr. Beecham is right; I am no longer a boy."

He was standing quite close to her, and the great hunger of his face warned her of the truth of his words. She remembered that the strong, hot blood of the Kings, which was wont to rise in a flood and beat with decision, flowed in his veins.

She stepped back toward the stairs raising her hands and holding them palms outward as if to ward off some impending catastrophe, looking at him with play of sarcastic humor accompanying her words of rebuke.

"John! John! for Heaven's sake, dear boy, do not get up a King tragedy."

She commenced ascending the stairs as she spoke, with an air of being grieved or offended.

The mad boy followed her as far as the foot of them, where he stood watching her departure, until

the graceful outline of her haughty head and black robed figure was concealed by a turn in the upper hall. Then with a sense of humiliation wounding his pride and affections, he flung himself passionately out of the house. The storm within him had reached a climax ; the rebels of his bosom had escaped all law of regular action ; dangerous emotions plunged into the current of his hot blood and ran rampant through his veins. He was so utterly wretched that he tried to get up reactionary thoughts and feelings, as a sort of panacea to sooth an insatiable longing for something that touched and tantalized him almost to madness. His mind seemed to recoil of itself from its own sharp shocks on the side of intensity, and the struggle to reach some cool middle ground reflection upon such episodes as had made their first impressions in the plastic mould of his boyish fancy and affection. He contemplated the picture memory offered for his inspection of the old fashioned mansion with its spacious grounds yielding to its possessors so much that was sweet and useful to their daily needs. He saw his mother's quiet, dignified figure moving about the house in attendance upon her daily duties, in connection with the maid ; and his father's substantial gray clothed figure in the garden. For the first time in sixteen months he was homesick. He took the car a block away from the house to ride down town. Upon arriving at the office, he endeavored to fix his thoughts upon the necessary labors of the day. He wrote for two or three hours and then sat staring at the copy which was being urgently called for. He was disgusted with the effort he had made to force his thoughts into practical channels of work.

"It is better I lose my position on good credit, than I should damn myself in the estimation of the whole staff, as a fool !"

He tore up the copy, flinging it into the waste basket, and sent up word that he was too ill to-day to think clearly, upon which he left his room before objection could be made to his departure. As he descended the stairs of the editorial rooms, he met a little school of reporters sailing into port with their wares in their pockets.

"Hello, King," they cried, in a jovial way. "What's the matter?" one more observing than the others, inquired. "Are you sick or in trouble? You look confounded white.

"Strange!" was his laconic reply. "I feel black," and so he passed on through the office into the street.

It was near noon, yet the day was cool with a breath of spring in the air. He stepped into a restaurant, but could not eat; he went out again, walking on aimlessly, suffering from an empty stomach, and a full head aching beneath his hat. All this time he was well aware with a sort of a sub-consciousness that the battle driving him to frenzy was not to reveal and subdue, but rather to conceal the real enemy of his peace; an angel impulse of his soul upon which he had fixed the flaming mask of a devil to blister his conscience; an emotion which he associated with a nameless sin. That it existed was a mortification to his sense of what was manly and true in his estimation of his friend, arising as it did from an almost groundless suspicion that it was possible Paul Astor had provoked an impulse of passion in the white bosom of his fair cousin.

"My God!" at length he cried aloud, out of the depths of his wretchedness, "how have I dared to think of her so? She is what I have believed her to be; if she is not, no woman ever was, ever can be. I have no word, no act of hers on which to condemn her; her sweet Christian virtue has set her white womanhood beyond the pale of such desires. It is

true that I worship her, and because she is a woman it has wrought madness in me. It is the fatal curse of being a man, I suppose, but she, our black-robed, pale-faced saint, with the thought of God in her heart and the cross of Christ upon her bosom, is like one of her own ascension lilies, unblemished by a touch of the world. Even her clod of a husband feels the loftiness of the character I have dared to profane. I—John King :—It is not her fault that she has unconsciously called into secret expression an attribute of my nature with which it must always have been largely endowed. She did not create me ; she has simply wrought upon one string of my being until it is all out of tune. I am as I am, unworthy ; she is as she is, gentle, pure, and holy. How could such a woman understand such a man as I have become. She would despise me, pah ! I despise myself.” Ten o’clock brought him to this conclusion and the door of their residence.

It was his custom to attend the theatre on this evening, so that not being expected home, he sought to get into the house quietly. Opening the vestibule door with his latch key, he stepped cautiously inside and closed it behind him.

At the foot of the stairs a dim light was burning. The gilded jets running up by the carved post of the balustrade, was supported by the gauntleted hand of a bronze statuette of Sir Charles Vane.

Sir Charles would be on duty late to-night, as torch-bearer to the expected lord of the Beecham mansion. It was one of his club nights.

With a little care taking spirit, he looked up at the tiny flame enclosed in the pink globe over Sir Charles’s cavalier hat, and turned the button a trifle lower. He did this mechanically, after which he began to pick his way upstairs ; the soft, rich carpets deaden-

ing the sound of his footfalls. When he had reached the third step, he stopped.

Thinking he would like to have a talk with Mr. Beecham when he should come in, if he was not too drunk to be intelligent, he retraced his steps, and entered the imposing drawing-room, all blue and gold, with the spacious magnificence of the library and music-room opening into it by an extension of arched doorways; and the conservatory on the other side closed by folding doors. To his surprise, he found a dim light burning in one of the chandeliers of the drawing-room and the conservatory door was slightly ajar. It was not, however, so marked a circumstance that a light should be found burning in the lower part of the house as to arouse any suspicion, but it made the place seem inviting. He seated himself for a few moments in one of the great, springy, velvet chairs, with his eyes fixed upon the open door of the conservatory; he thus sat, thinking of the first time he had seen Alice Beecham standing against the green background of the shrubs and flowers, with the black cross upon her bosom, and the white lilies in her hand. An irresistible force drew him to the spot. When he had reached the entrance, the umbrageous green bordering the long walks, the fantastic shadows of the moon shining through the glass and the rich odor of the flowers tempted him to step within the room. He had noticed a bunch of ascension lilies standing in a Venetian glass upon one of the drawing-room tables. They contained such suggestions of the person who had placed them there he felt impelled to take the whole bunch and crush them against his hot lips, only to-night it seemed impossible to defile with his touch anything that the hand of Alice Beecham had made sacred. He would go into the conservatory and take one if it grew there for him, which he might keep as a memento of these

days when he should go away. He had just reached this point of romantic revery, when his ear was surprised by the low laugh of a woman, accompanied by the graver notes of a man's voice. He turned back, leaning against the inside of the half-open door. He was astounded by the sight of Paul Astor and Alice Beecham entering the drawing-room together, where they seated themselves in such a position, that he could both see and listen to all that passed between them.

Petrified with astonishment, and enraged as he was by what the scene suggested, the instincts of a gentleman would have forced him to reveal himself, had not the honorable intentions been given the last constraint of angry curiosity by her words. In the first place the jealous eyes of the listener took notice of the fact, that Mrs. Beecham had discarded her customary habit of black, and was wearing to-night a white trailing gown, a sort of a negligee affair, which was exceedingly becoming, intensifying, as it did, the darkness of her hair and eyes and adding a marked significance to the black band of velvet caressing her round, white throat, from which depended the sacred emblem of their faith.

"What do you suppose he said to me this morning?" Mrs. Beecham was inquiring with an amused smile upon her lips, as she settled the train of her dress by a thrust of her slippered foot against it.

"Ah!" thought John in bitter wrath and a full reception of all his half entertained suspicions, "she talks of me to him to-night, with that look of cruel amusement." As the rector did not immediately reply, she persisted, "you could not guess, Paul, how much of a discoverer Mr. Beecham has become."

"No," he replied, with a sort of an abstract hesitancy in his speech, and a white, still look upon his gray features. "I might not guess what Mr. Beecham has

had the astuteness to discover ; I do know some things he has not discovered," he responded in a slight tone of sarcasm, adding, as she would have interrupted him : " You are still leading me away from the sorrowful object of my visit here to-night. You know I have felt constrained to accept the hour you appointed for this interview, but I am much distressed, Alice, lest it is ill advised action on my part, that may compromise you."

Something came into Alice Beecham's face John had never seen there before, as she leaned gently forward to lay her hand lightly upon the rector's knee.

" Paul, if one should hold in their hand a cup of poison which they had been doomed to swallow ; would you grudge them a little dalliance with sweet life ?"

There were tears in the eyes that she raised appealingly to his face, and the sound of them in her musical voice. With an expression of being startled from his reserve, he covered the hand resting upon his knee with his own, and held it thus, warmly clasped, while she continued speaking in a tone of light banter and amusement.

" I want you to know, Paul, that Mr. Beecham has made a most remarkable discovery in his own house," she was now laughing openly. The man holding her hand continued to regard her with a pained intensity in his face she assumed not to notice, as she went on like one forcing herself to display a spirit of humor somewhat at variance with a deeper and concealed emotion.

" Why, Paul ! Mr. Beecham has discovered, really discovered at last that he has a wife, and that she is an object worthy of some particular attention on his part, as his discoveries have extended so far into the province of his domestic affairs, that he thinks he sees

the green eye in the person of my cousin, John, set upon his own valued possessions."

"Where is he to-night?" inquired the rector, sternly.

She laughed bitterly. "Think of it, Paul! Mr. Beecham proposes to contest the case with that poor boy, who has a clever head to be sure, but came to us so awkward, as you know, I had not only to fashion his religious precepts and teach him his prayers, but also the proper way to dispose of his hands and feet. Poor John! that he should aspire so much, or that I should fall so low as to be suspected of engaging in some domestic intrigue with my young cousin. You are hurting my hand, Paul."

"Pardon me, dear Mrs. Beecham, I was thinking of your husband. I am deeply disturbed this evening," with which statement he withdrew his hand to place it across his eyes, where he sat quietly listening with his elbow resting upon the arm of the chair.

"One woman," thought John, "hath more of a devil in her than ten men. She is a female Mephistophiles."

The rector did not share John's harsh opinion of his fair cousin; all his tender, manly sympathies were stirred to their depths by the wrongs of an innocent and beautiful woman. All his incense fell upon the guilty man who had flung his jewel out to the temptation of robbers. A momentary silence fell between them, during which the heart of the listener beat with jealous fury, while the bowed head of the rector suggested that he was engaged in prayer, and Alice Beecham, with a puzzled frown upon her low brow, beat her slippered foot softly upon the carpet.

"Paul, did you ever think while performing the beautiful marriage service of our church, that your words and a loop of gold have set the seal to more human misery than all the prayers of the saints have

ever redeemed. Marriage is generally a mistake—for a woman—a most terrible mistake.”

“ Oh, Alice, Alice ! Little woman ! ” in his earnestness he leaned suddenly toward her, grasping the arm of the chair. Her composure was so thoroughly shaken by what she observed in him, she struggled to save herself by not considering that which she had provoked. She rose hastily from her seat, but failed in her effort ; such a conquest is very rare in the life of any woman ; she knew it and reluctantly yet fearfully, turned her face ; their eyes met in that silent language of the heart to which she was far from being insensible.

Trembling and pale, she dropped weakly back into her chair, putting out her hands as she did so with a cry of helpless submission which might have led many a less desperate man to prejudice his interests with heaven for the joy of such consent ; but the incorruptible nature of the man recoiled suddenly from its own guilty fancies. Aware that he had failed to carry into practice in his life the lofty precept she had taught, he struggled to free himself from that fatal fascination which Mrs. Beecham exercised over him. He rose from his chair, also, with some air of decision, but with a face still expressive of all that he suffered in the conflict.

“ Alice, you know it must be so ; I must go. I am no longer a teacher and a leader of my flock, but one of the sheep, and it is not proper I should set myself before them as an example, where I have so failed in practice. No, no ! I should anticipate with every word I uttered the wrath of a justly incensed God. In their presence, pricked by an accusing conscience, I should feel constrained to cry, ‘unclean !’ Dear Mrs. Beecham, the weakness of my heart, and the strength of that love which should be your protection, demand that I act along that line of conduct which at some

later season our judgment must approve. If I so far forgot myself as to act as your betrayer, I should prove the most damnable of men. God only knows how hard pressed I am to-night by temptation, and with what sorrow I say that I must leave you."

At this point she interrupted by raising her face and one hand in silent protest against this decision, then springing angrily to her feet, she clutched the cross upon her bosom, tore the black ribbon from her neck, and flung it passionately at his feet.

"Be merciful to me if you are so cruel to yourself!" she entreated, losing all self-command. "Be merciful to me, Paul!" The red blood of confusion followed this speech, as half ashamed of her vehemence, she bent down her dark head to conceal her burning face in the palms of her hands. He simply stood looking upon the graceful figure, so suggestive of agonized humility, and although he spoke no word, made no motion, his lips were like a line of steel in their strong effort to repress that which beat behind them for expression; his eyes burned with passionate emotion, and his cheeks were white with the pain of teasing desire.

That moment had arrived which was destined to bring the crucial strain upon the weak link which bound and made even the virtue of an exemplary character. Contemplating a proud woman so humbled before him, he had a double force to contend against, endowed as he was with that fineness of sense to feel an attraction on the material side of his nature to her remarkable beauty, and upon the spiritual side to that intellectual kinship, which day after day, and month after month of intimate association had commanded his veneration of her exceptional character, so that almost before he realized the force of her presence in his thoughts, she had knit herself to his inner life so closely he could not touch any passion of

his nature where she was not lodged as a vital part of it. For a few seconds he seemed incapable of speech. He stretched forth his arms only to quickly withdraw them, as he clutched his hand to his side, his brow, in an action of distress.

"Alice ! oh, Alice! dear little woman—you must forgive me for this—this once," he took her slowly, deliberately into his arms, as if all the time he was holding in check the ecstatic rush of intense feeling. He laid his cheek against her own, he brushed her hair lightly with his thin hand. "Between you and my God, my heart is divided !" he said, then he pressed his lips passionately against her warm white throat. "In my life both must live forever !" he concluded. While speaking thus he dropped her from his embrace as suddenly as he had taken her up. All the glistening light of happiness which had made his strong, fine face beautiful, was succeeded by the cloud and sorrow of his necessary departure, as he picked up the discarded emblem of their faith, and threw it hastily over her shoulder. With swift, changing color in her face, and passion burning in her dark eyes, she would have repudiated the claim, only that he looked at her so reproachfully. "For my sake, Mrs. Beecham, you would break your bond with Heaven ! For my sake, let me implore you to renew it, and forget if possible, how weak a man can be in the strength of his great love of what is so tenderly human. In the years of solitude or years of work I may number, when I cannot fail to remember that which I should forget, that only one woman lives for me, let me feel the willing sacrifice that I have made of myself for the love of God and her honor, has not been in vain."

Then as if he sought to rebind her heart to a divine claim strengthened by the tie of his great love for her, he stooped to kiss the cross upon her bosom,

and was gone, almost before she had sufficiently recovered from the shock of his open avowal, to realize that in the hour she had won the noble love of the noblest man she had ever known she had lost him forever.

For a few moments she stood transfixed like a woman turned to stone, staring at the open door through which he had vanished, then she threw herself upon the divan, and, burying her face upon her knees she commenced to cry hysterically.

From the first John had been so thoroughly surprised by the scene in the drawing room, he had lost a sense of his own position as an actor in it. All his faculties were over-strained and fraught with excitement. This woman,—at last the troublesome problem was solving itself in his mind ; this woman in her infinite variety had revealed herself at length, as not a saint set upon some lofty, and unapproachable pinnacle ; she was simply a woman, lovable, loving, who could make grave mistakes, like other mortals. If it cost him the final demolition of an ideal he could endure her being true to something. It destroyed in one instant his faith in the claim of religion to rule into quiet the passions of our susceptible hearts, it leveled humanity to his own crude standing in the moral world. Nothing, he concluded, under the cloak was finer than himself, and the knowledge gave liberty to an impulse he had struggled to crush as unworthy of himself and some lofty dream he had entertained of humanity. He saw this proud, unapproachable woman, wrenched by the same passions as had made the conflict so bitter within himself, and listening to her cry of anguish as she sat weeping upon the divan, the sympathy of kindred feelings drew him to her with that resistless longing which had ruled the rector's actions.

He did not care how many men she had ruined by

her fatal beauty, her dangerous power of fascination ; how many men had kissed her, if he too might share their favors. This thought led him to recall her scathing description of himself. "She had taught an awkward boy to use his hands and feet." He grew red in the face with anger, as all these thoughts and impressions, which it takes so long to describe, flashed very rapidly through John's mind while he stood undecided whether to let his presence be known or to allow Mrs. Beecham to leave the room, and keep his knowledge to himself.

Before he had arrived at the point of decision Mrs. Beecham arose from the divan, brushed her eyes with a delicate lace handkerchief, shrugged her shoulders, buried her nose in the ascension lilies, betrayed quite a good deal of concern in their arrangement, pulling up a stem here, and thrusting down a flower there, until apparently satisfied with the effect, she walked over to one of the mirrors that were set into the wall with heavy gilt mouldings, where she commenced what seemed like a scientific survey of her face and figure.

She toyed idly with the cross upon which an earnest soul had just left the final seal of a heart-breaking confession, and the man whom her prayers had led hellward instead of heavenward, saw the slow, cruel smile of triumph creep round the corners of her beautiful lips. Such a smile as Cleopatra's face must have worn after she had won Antony.

"My God !" muttered John, "she has played her part to the very last act, under a mask, she hasn't even a heart," and sick and faint he turned away from her, sitting hopelessly down among the plants ; he covered his face with his hands, experiencing that relief which tears sometimes bring to save our reason. He wept, with the great drops of grief and disappointment rolling through his fingers and dropping upon

the floor. They were the last tears John King ever shed.

Then he went to his room, hurriedly packed his trunk and left the house. He made his way to the Revere House, where he hired a room, sent for his trunk and called for a bottle of wine; then he commenced to write to Mrs. Beecham. He dropped the formal title which great respect had formerly led him to use when addressing her. "Alice Beecham," he wrote, "your prayers have availed much with Heaven, it is a pity you should not have a full knowledge of their benefit, as they have sent one noble soul to the cloisters and a more reckless devil to Hell. Yours with unmitigated contempt.—JOHN KING."

Alice Beecham, who was far from being the wicked woman John King believed, although too proud to request an explanation where so much was suggested she would not care to talk about, never ceased to brood upon this rebuke to her character.

It relieved his sense of injury to charge upon her the meditated ruin of his soul; to disturb the even balance of life by casting the weight of his prejudice on that side of the scale which would make light of the virtue of women, because one of them had not acted up to his high idea of a woman.

Every glass of wine, which now he began to take in immoderate quantities, he said within himself, Alice Beecham is responsible for; every dollar he flung away in reckless attempts to efface her image from his soul was accounted to her.

After awhile, overcome and worn out, he set his weary face homeward, with a longing for rest, and a sense of guilt still tearing at the fagged end of his peace.

Long, kindly, loving letters from his mother were freighted with anxious inquiries. "Why had he given up his position? why had he left Mrs. Beecham's?"

she could get no satisfactory report from the lady herself, although she had twice written her concerning her son." Mrs. Beecham's reply was enclosed with one of these motherly epistles, it ran as follows : "MY DEAR COUSIN :—About all I can say of John's freak is that he has the King blood in him ; perhaps you may have learned ere this that it is a bit heady and unruly ; although Cousin John, Sr., always seemed to have it under control, John King, Jr. acted his pleasure in coming to me, and in going has done the same I suppose. He certainly was not sent away."

"Curse her !" cried John, in a fury, flinging the letter into the fire. After this the very air of the same city where Alice Beecham breathed seemed to stifle him, and he went home.

When he arrived at the old mansion his father and mother expressed much surprise at his jaded appearance, but they could get very little information concerning his life, or the cause of his evident trouble. For a year John remained at home in quiet ; studying some, and doing desultory work with his pen in the way of reviews for several magazines : but whom fate has selected for honor cannot long conceal himself from the public eye.

He received a second invitation to go to New York as editor of the dramatic column of one of the great dailies. Already a desire for movement and adventure was making itself felt in his life. The scenes of his boyhood and the monotony of country life palled upon a mind that had proven itself capable to cope with the larger concerns of life.

About this time his mother, who had been ailing for a long time, was stricken with a sudden illness, of which she died after a few hours' suffering. Upon John now devolved the sad duty of companioning his father's lonely hours. The loss of his mother made a deep impression upon his strong, passionate nature.

The tenderest good seemed to pass out from his life with her death, and a settled bitterness to fix itself in his soul. His father grew silent, and even morose, until his malady terminated in madness. One day the sun rose on his dead body, wet with evening dew, stretched upon his wife's grave. Under a cloud John sold the old homestead, and left the town now peopled for him only with ghosts and sad memories.

For a number of years he threw himself into the whirl and excitement of a semi-bohemian existence in New York.

He had no special vocation, and could hardly account for all this time in after years.

John King was awakened to the fact of his aimless existence at last by an acquaintance inquiring why in the world he did not go in for theatrical management. This idea had no sooner taken King's fancy than he commenced to investigate the business.

He gained much valuable information, and in a very short time became closely associated with the theatrical world.

His efforts to obtain a position as manager were at last rewarded by receiving a communication which ran as follows :

"MY DEAR MR. KING ; Having heard you spoken of as a prospective manager, will you kindly call upon me Wednesday, at three o'clock, when we may be able to make some arrangements in regard to your managing my forthcoming tour. Signed,

AVIS BRANSCOMBE."

CHAPTER III.

JOHN KING, shrewd, sharp, business-like, met his appointments with the woman without a fear of failure. Despite his inexperience with things theatrical, his journalist's work had given him a keen insight into all that was necessary for the success of a theatrical manager.

The woman herself, was long past the height of her fame, in fact, a semi-downward career was all that now awaited her. Perhaps John King would not have chosen Avis Branscombe as his first attempt, had he been able to make a choice as to whom he would manage, but, comparatively unknown in New York, even as a journalist, he was compelled to gain his initial experience with Branscombe. The woman realized upon their first interview, which took place in a dingy room of her dark little flat, that she had to deal with a man whose business ability was far superior to her own.

For the last three years nonentities had been endeavoring to pull her through each successive season, generally succeeding, but not before, bit by bit, the little fortune which she had managed to save had dwindled down to a few thousands. There had been an invalid mother and shiftless husband to care for ; both were dead now, but during her troubles and disappointments she had become addicted to the morphine habit, and taken altogether Branscombe at forty-five was pretty nearly a wreck.

Why the woman had insisted upon remaining before the public, when youth, beauty and popularity had deserted her, was no more to be wondered at, than the attraction which a gaming table has for the professional gambler who has lost all.

Branscombe forgot her present defects in the remembering of her past triumphs.

In small Western towns people still recalled the beautiful Branscombe, and on this fact she had built, year after year, the hope of winning applause and admiration as of old.

Poor soul ! in the large cities people had forgotten or only laughed at her poor attempts when they remembered.

Not a pleasant outlook for John King certainly ; but bad management he knew had caused many a failure in life ; while the clever mind and a shrewd pen had frequently kept a man's head above water, until the public had been coaxed into first noticing, then admiring, and at last worshiping. A newspaper was simply a tool to be bought or used. John King knew that men were sometimes influenced by the memory of beauty as typified by some past or present sweetheart in criticising an actress's work.

There was not the slightest difficulty in completing arrangements between Branscombe and her new manager. Hitherto she had been obliged to assume a portion of the management ; now, the business devolving upon a man competent to contend with all the trials of a thirty-five week tour, she had leisure to think more of her work and less of the paying of railway fares from town to town.

John King went back to his little hall room in Twenty-fourth Street with a sense of having accomplished the means to enter at last upon a career which interested him. He was uncommunicative in regard to his new venture ; one wondered when he did his work, he was so very quiet and apparently indifferent.

The general conception of the character of a theatrical manager is that he must be free to talk in regard to the talent of his star and the large receipts of the box office. John King spoke of neither. He

personally engaged the company for Branscombe's support without once consulting that lady. His knowledge of acting was somewhat limited, but his intuition of character was not to be cheated. He was a good listener, always waiting patiently until his applicant had finished his or her story ; but his opinion was fixed upon at the outset. Finding that there was a vacancy yet to be filled in the company, King called late one afternoon at a well known agency in Thirty-fourth Street.

Mrs. Weatherspoon although hopelessly uncivil to aspirants not well on the road to success, or able to return her favors by proper souvenirs, greeted all managers, as she did John King, with an effusive manner and a expansive smile. She begged him to be seated, and before he had time to state his errand, commenced to chat with enthusiasm of several special pets ; concluding with the inquiry as to whether there was not a vacancy in the Branscombe company ?

When John King had answered in the affirmative, Mrs. Weatherspoon rustled away in that everlasting black silk to secure photographs for King's inspection.

He looked them over carefully, declining all with the whimsical remark that they were too much on the "soubrette" style and he was looking for an "ingenue."

Mrs. Weatherspoon sniffed contemptuously and resumed her knitting, which she had dropped temporarily. To think that her aquarium (I say aquarium advisedly, for were the occupants not in the swim ?) did not contain a suitable specimen !

In the meantime, King had taken a photograph from a table near him. It is a sweet, innocent face that he contemplates, with soft, dreamy eyes, and a Burne Jones curve of lip and chin.

"Who is this, Mrs. Weatherspoon ?" King inquires.

"That? well——" Mrs. Weatherspoon could not remember.

"Evidently not one of the pets," King thinks to himself.

"Ah, here is the address," he says, having turned the photograph over, as is natural when one is contemplating a face which interests him; and King reads, "Eileen Kendall, 167 W. Sixty-third St., New York City."

"If you really wish, I will send her to you," Mrs. Weatherspoon remarks, without the usual fluttering anxiety in her voice.

"No, decidedly, this girl is not of the chosen few."

King hesitates for a moment, glances at the picture once more, and then says slowly:

"Yes; send her to me. To-morrow at eleven," and then adds as he bids Mrs. Weatherspoon good afternoon, "if she is as pretty as the photograph she will do."

So it followed that the next day, promptly at eleven o'clock, Eileen Kendall called upon King.

She was almost at the commencement of her career, but her type of beauty suited the character in the cast, and fifteen minutes later she had signed her contract.

She felt perfectly happy at the prospect of this opportunity. She was ambitious and intelligent, and as was proved later, a girl of marked talent.

King, the company complete and his dates made, started west for the opening town, and on the fifth of October the tour commenced.

Business progressed favorably and King's reputation grew; he firmly believed in himself, and despite an occasional drop in the receipts of the box office he manifested not the slightest concern about it, knowing that his energy would bring his star safely through the season. Which was true.

The woman, who for the last few seasons had been hopelessly drifting from New York to the coast, and back again from the coast to New York, now realized that it was not a matter of hopeless drift but actual financial enterprise.

Of Eileen he saw but little ; she was quiet, dignified, and did her work well. He would have liked very much to have seen more of her, but curbed his impatience, hoping by so doing she might voluntarily unbend in his direction. Her experience in the world had been so brief that the girlish ideals were still fresh. She looked upon John King in her exaggerated fancy as a soul to be saved, perhaps ; but she was utterly ignorant of the undercurrents that awaited the woman, who, putting out her hand to save him, would be hurried on to a wild whirlpool of disaster.

The man's ideal of woman had been rudely shattered, and in bitterness of spirit he had turned to the pleasures appealing to the lowest side of his nature.

The girl had but small conception of all this ; her fancy pictured the making of a hero. John King saw only a pretty face, nothing more. And she was a woman, therefore to be won.

This first season ended most successfully. Upon his arrival in New York, King organized a stock company for a summer season in a Western city.

Eileen had shown so much ability that King for some time had regarded her in the light of a financial speculation. He engaged her, therefore, for a secondary position, knowing it would give her an opportunity to polish her already well developed art for the coming season.

In the meantime, Eileen's girlish fancy for King had grown into a strong attachment, and this, linked to a great ambition, made her as clay in the hands of the sculptor.

John King did his best to mould the model to his own selfish end. Her ambition and her love for King, her desire to reach the goal for his sake, made the otherwise arduous work of this summer seem less difficult. She looked anxiously forward to the time when she might attempt all the great rôles, and worked and studied with this end in view.

So it transpired that when at last her great opportunity came, she was quite equal to it. Her face had grown even more beautiful ; it warmed and glowed, developing like a flower beneath the tropical sun.

John King noticed, and for a moment wondered.

Her opportunity came most unexpectedly. Camille was (in stage parlance) to be "put on." Regardless of her desire to assume the rôle, the fair leading woman realized that her tendency to an embonpoint would compel her to resign the part. Eileen entering the Theatre one morning with the part of Olympe in her hand, but the part of Camille in her head, found the company ranged about the stage exhibiting an unusual interest.

Not a person would so far flatter or please her to the extent of conveying the necessary intelligence, and it was not until Timmons, the stage manager, appeared, that she knew she was to try Camille.

Little incredulous smiles played over the faces of the company, as Eileen walked to the right of the stage, each person endeavoring not to betray their belief in the girl's success.

Eileen trembled a little and shivered as she frequently did from nervousness, but by the time she received her entrance cue she had regained her power, and an almost supernatural force seemed to surround her. A sense of King's presence spurred her on to do her best, and from the end of the third act until the close of the rehearsal, the company never ceased to wonder.

That the girl had power there had been but little doubt, but power allied to such a great conception seemed nothing short of marvelous.

Of all who had witnessed her performance upon the opening night, none felt more impressed by it than John King as he sat in the stage box and leaned across the rail to watch the impassioned play of the young actress' features.

It was not death simulated, but real torture of the heart expiring with the blasted young life. Before the curtain dropped, while a perfect storm of flowers were showered over the footlights, John King had hurried to the stage that he might be first to offer congratulations to the victorious actress; he, however, allowed her full time for all the honor of the occasion, which recalled her again and again, but as soon as the curtain fell for the last time, he came deliberately across the stage holding out both his firm, white hands, with a smile of triumph greeting that which wreathed the girl's lips. With a pretty breathless show of exhaustion, she dropped suddenly down in the midst of the dearly earned trophies of success. As she turned to gather a few flowers into her lap, she raised her left hand to meet the warm clasp of King's fingers. He placed his strong arm about her waist, and she came to her feet with a little short, hard breath of passionate feeling, which he did not fail to notice. He held her against him for a moment, with such response in his face, that the girl made a little half frightened effort to free herself from his welcome embrace, turning her head away from him with modest grace, in such a way as to present the temptation to King who stooped to lay his lips for one moment against her white throat.

CHAPTER IV.

JOHN KING, MANAGER.

UPON his arrival in New York, John King felt flattered upon being asked to take the position as manager of a young Italian actor, who had already played two successful seasons in America.

Eileen was offered the position as leading-woman ; her fair beauty making an excellent foil for the dark, handsome foreigner. A new and greater interest now appeared to John King. Here was success taking him by the hand, congenial people were surrounding him, demanding that he become a social success in conjunction with his star.

Business kept him in New York most of the time. It seemed to Eileen that they were slowly but surely drifting away from each other.

Savelli was meeting with triumph after triumph.

Eileen was falling more and more into the background. King showed his supreme ambition and utter selfishness by entirely forgetting the girl's existence.

He was developing a great capacity for business, and a partnership had been formed between himself and his star ; thus the interest of one became the interest of the other.

Several weeks had elapsed, when one day it occurred to the practical mind of John King, that Eileen was not playing up to the usual mark. She had worked with almost a man's power of endurance at the commencement of the engagement, and, as a leading woman for the star had given perfect satisfaction. At last, John King spoke to her after a

particularly bad performance, in a tone of kindly reproof, concluding with the admonition that unless she improved upon the following evening, she must anticipate a dismissal from the company.

She did not move, nor make any audible reply, although her pale lips trembled nervously, as she sat staring at him with wide, tearless eyes, full of a misery she could summon no voice to utter.

Her pretty, white fingers were locked against her heart, as if thus to silently locate the seat of affliction. Something in the dumb anguish of her eyes stirred the kindly impulses of his nature. He took a step toward her with an expression of alarm.

"For God's sake, Eileen!" The last vestige of color left her face as he spoke, and before he could aid her, she had fallen to the floor, where she lay gray and lifeless, for a time insensible to pain. With instincts of noble generosity, which impelled John King to consider his responsibility to any creature that depended upon him, he stooped to raise her from the floor. He was moved to this action by a feeling of pity "akin to love." Such emotion as one extends to unfortunate inferior creatures, who have a claim upon our tender human sympathies, without any title to our respect.

"Poor little Eileen," he said chafing her face, with his soft, cool hand. Had he been as self analytical as he was inclined to dissect others, he might have discovered in the complaint between them, where their lives were running at cross purposes, that his was the larger fault. If she had become a nonentity, he had made her such by the great strength and dominance of his nature, which had so overborne the weaker spirit of the soft, loving woman; he had crushed her individuality and merged it in his own; he had left the robbed treasure-house of a human soul with one power; that, her senseless worship of himself; whereas

John King had been endowed with some fine qualities, which under ordinary circumstances, might have made him a very good and lovable man, he was under all circumstances, a very poor idol and unfit to be worshiped. Perhaps he knew it, and recoiled by instinct from the idolatry which sets a man so much above his natural plane. Criticism and resistance was what he required to awaken deep feeling and strong endeavor.

As soon as she commenced to revive, which she did after a few minutes, he placed her upon the sofa of the dressing-room, where she sat with the heavy tears dropping from her downcast eyes, still pale and non-resistant. He was more phased by this attitude which she assumed, than he would have been in facing a whole regiment of angry men. He stood in the centre of the floor with the highly polished boots in which his feet were incased placed squarely together, his hands thrust into his pockets, his shoulders braced back, but his chin resting meditatively upon his bosom. The figure, so suggestive of John King in a quandary, was characteristically marked by the long side glances which he bestowed upon the weeping girl, and the savage little grinding of his teeth on the end of his moustache. At last he spoke again ; thinking it was only just to her to be gentle, he asked, soothingly, if "she was as ambitious as ever?"

"Just as ambitious," she had replied, coldly.

"Yes, but you do not work as well," King answered, in a tone of annoyance.

"Not as well," the girl thought. She knew why she did not work as well, she realized that King had already wearied of her, and the knowledge made her faint and sick. How was she to live? The world stretched forth an endless blank to her.

If he could but realize how much she needed him.

His love was her inspiration, her very life. Already his neglect was beginning to tell in her work.

The shame of it ! the bitter shame of it !

The stormy passion had succumbed to a drought which parched her lips, paled the rose-tinted face, and dulled the brilliancy of her eyes. Now that the girl's bad attempts were interfering with King financially, there was nothing to do but cast her aside.

Eileen realized that a climax was approaching. She knew that her work grew less spontaneous with each performance, it became harder and harder to work up to the star, she met the love scenes with a strange, cold mechanism.

"It will never do," John King said to his star one evening, referring to Eileen. Although it interfered with Savelli, he had a kindly thought for the girl who had surprised him at first with her talent.

"Try her a few more performances, King."

This suggestion was acted upon, and the woman, whose heart seemed breaking beneath the strain was tried a few more performances with no better results. There was nothing to be done but to engage some one else for the position.

It was not a pleasant task John King set himself to do that afternoon, namely, to give Eileen—how ominous the words are ; her two weeks' notice. The girl greeted him with a severity of manner which piqued him for the moment.

"You are angry, Eily?" he asked with that old, winning intonation of the voice, which rang through all the chambers of sense, as an echo of tenderness from the fading dream of her life. A flash of hope brightened her face as she came across the floor, with her happy eyes raised to his and her lips to be kissed ; but the tenderness of the man's nature was quickly over-ruled by another quality of selfishness, which

brought his practical business mind once more to the front.

"You are falling off, Eily, both in looks and acting, what is it?"

The girl's fierce uncontrollable pride forced her to silence; could she tell this man, who had long since forgotten she had even a heart, that it was her great love for him, and his cold indifference to her, which had ruined her power as an actress? She knew he would laugh and doubt the fact.

"Is my work unsatisfactory?" she asked quietly.

"Very," he returns.

"I am sorry. I have tried to do my best."

"Then it is a very bad best," King says sarcastically.

The girl's lip quivers, "and—and—" she hesitates.

"And you will kindly accept your two weeks' notice."

The horror and agony of that moment John King never knew; the woman prayed in her heart that he might never know. She seemed turned to stone, and she had no word for him.

To King it was so easy to become nauseated with the intimate relations of life; so when Eileen made a weak appeal to his heart, his reply was this: "You do not comprehend that to me you have ceased to be attractive. What in the devil has come across you? Your first performances were charming conceptions, I thought you had a soul, instead I find you have only a body. What do I want of a body without sense? It may amuse me to-day, but to-morrow I am tired."

With this cruel speech he would have left her, only that she cast herself before him in the most beseeching attitude of despair.

"Step upon me! crush me! anything! anything! only, for God's sake, don't leave me this way!"

He looked down upon her, thus abased before him, with an emotion of tender compassion softening the stern, scornful expression of his features ; but experienced immediately a revulsion of feeling he could not overcome. There was not sufficient force in the woman nor principle in himself to hold him to honor. As he stood one moment, halting between the native kindness of his nature, which led him to consider a human thing in pain, and the natural abhorrence with which she now inspired him by her exhibition of weakness, his ruined manhood appeared half as pathetic as the girl's utter self-abandonment.

Looking upon him now, his robust nature softened by generations of culture, he had decidedly the grace of strength about him, but a strength that had become brutal in its effects upon his general character.

"It is no use, little girl, you may just as well brace up and get over it. To women of your type this sort of thing is as catching as the measles and not more dangerous."

"No, no !" she cried, seizing his hands, that were almost as delicate as her own. "No, no ! I can't bear it !"

He coolly disengaged himself from her desperate fingers, at the same time forcibly raising her and compelling her to sit in a chair.

"Believe me, Eily, I appreciate good acting on the stage, but not in private ; and I do not think it proper that a woman should kneel to me."

"You are a weak, a very weak woman ! If I loved you, like the rest of your inconstant sex, you would only hate me in return."

He stopped before her with almost a wish to take the keen edge off her regret.

"You are a pretty child, Eily, and I have but in-

initiated you into scenes through which you must pass if you want to get on as an actress. You will find there is but one way open to a girl upon the stage, and that is the use of her beauty as a purchasing power for the favors of men."

She did not move or reply. She sat with her brows pressed against the back of the chair, her face concealed in the circle of her bare arms, her delicate fingers alone expressive of what she suffered.

"Look here, Eily, I will give you one more chance to redeem yourself, and ruin me."

"I do not want it, let me go away. I have no wish to harm you," she said, wearily, adding with a hard, dry sob, "I can never act again! Never! never! never!"

"Oh, yes you can, dear; come, come; cheer up! Suppose you take a trip to Europe? I will give you enough to enable you to live quietly over there for awhile. When you come back to the stage, you will have become a more discreet and sensible woman."

She dropped her arms from her face at last and sat submissively looking up at him, her eyes full of agony, her cheeks white as paper, her lips weak and tremulous.

"If anything should happen, if—if—" her lips refused to form the words.

With this reference to something he now no longer cares to remember, a flush of shame stole across his face, as his eyes wavered beneath her steady look. He forced himself to reply to her, according to his own doubtful code of honor.

"You should understand I am not such a brute as that. I recognize the fact that you, as a woman, have some rights, which we, as men, are bound to respect. I have not compromised you; I have not harmed you, except in that fancy which makes you look so miserable now, and at which you will smile to-morrow.

But it is not in my nature to desert a woman in real trouble ; you need but to appeal to me, and I will help you."

He turned abruptly, leaving the girl to her own melancholy reflections.

She walked wearily across the room, where she stood some moments staring at her reflection in the mirror.

The storm had burst upon her in all its fury, and in her wretchedness and despair, she felt truly it was "a sorrow's crown of sorrow."

Toward dusk a message came from King. It was to the effect that he would leave for the East that night. In other words it was his farewell to Eileen.

He enclosed a draft on a foreign banking house, and extended his cruelty to the extreme by sending violets.

Taking them in her hands Eileen pressed her lips against them. For the first time since her interview with King, the tears, warm and welcome as summer rain, coursed down her cheek.

"He will understand !" she cried, her hands pitiously outstretched, "God will make him understand !"

But King did not understand ; and the girl at last realized that she had been tricked by her own innocent fancy. Her uncorrupted faith in humanity had blinded her to the realities of life.

So Eileen passed for a time out of John King's knowledge.

CHAPTER V.

ON his way East, in compliance with the request of an old friend, King stopped at Cleveland for the purpose of interviewing a young girl who wished to attempt the legitimate rôles. In a conference together, Savelli and King recalled Judith Kent's performance at the commencement of the season. Both gentlemen had been much impressed upon this occasion by the dramatic fire of the young actress's impersonation and the grace and beauty of her person.

Upon the morning John King was expected to arrive, Madame De Sequeria came into Judith Kent's apartment, and found that young lady curling her hair. Judith came into the room when she heard her friend calling in that high, sweet treble, which the stage so often develops in the female voices, "Judith! Judith, dear, where are you?"

"Here I am!" replied Judith, brandishing the curling-tongs as she advanced. Madame kissed the bright cheek of the girl daintily, then commenced to chide in a tone of pretended severity, denied by the look of tender admiration which she bestowed upon the charming face and rather tall and graceful figure before her.

"Any anxious princess who anticipates the arrival of a King should have her toilette made before this hour, why it is nine o'clock; already King is on his way."

"How do you know?"

"Because I have his telegram, I thought I would not ruffle your peaceful sleep by telling you last night."

"You did not tell me, Olivia, when you know the

time it takes to put the finishing touches to my charming make-up."

As she delivered this reproof, she ran laughingly away to complete her toilet, pinning up her hair as she went.

"Judith Kent, at the time we introduce her to you, was a young woman of twenty-five. She was possessed of a well rounded and symmetrical figure; she was rather tall, not awkwardly so; her face had the perfect oval of youth. Her brow, that was not pronounced, was yet fair and smooth and womanly in its character, her nose on a perfect line with it, was slender, sensitive, and finely shaped. Her eyes were remarkably beautiful. They were well set under the delicate tracery of their brows; so heavily fringed were the white lids that when she raised them, the shadow of their black lashes fell upon the clear iris. They were the eyes of Guido's Cenci, freed from the pathos and tragedy of a Beatrice. Lastly her chin was delicately moulded, and her mouth that was not too sharply chiseled, redeemed the face from a touch of coldness; it bespoke in its smiling frankness the warm, generous impulses of her nature, carefully guarded by the rule of pride and ambition; a pride freed from all elements of vanity, and an ambition that was set toward noble ends. She had had careful training in the solid branches of education, as well as development in those graces and accomplishments that finally led her to adopt the stage as a profession. Her manners were exceedingly frank and winning, her expression vivacious and changeful as her moods, which were sometimes pathetic, but more often manifested the spirit of light-hearted youth. She was not in the least conventional. She seemed to have laws and regulations of her own, and often loved to shock people by breaking the iron bans of custom. While Madame and Judith were at breakfast discussing him,

John King arrived, and with the business despatch that takes into account the passage of five minutes of time, he sent up his card, asking if Madame would see him in the parlor ; and knowing a woman's inclination to trifle with that valuable commodity which marks in the passage of its moments so much Heaven or Hell, fortune or disaster, in the life of a man, he supplemented the message with " Will Madame see me as soon as possible ? "

" Tell Mr. King that we will receive him here at once," replied Madame, as she closed the door, and turned upon Judith her last critical survey of that young lady's appearance.

" Dear Madame, don't look at me in that critical way," complained Judith, as she moved from the table, " it makes one feel as though they were about to be racked."

Madame smiled. " Here ! here !" Judith exclaimed whirling about suddenly with the point of her forefinger meditatively pressed against her lip.

" I find at the last moment my self-esteem has expired under the great weight of your opinion ; don't say you do not mistrust me, for I can correctly construe that look of concern which makes you ten years older just now than you should be. I am all of a shake with fear of this King of your's ; I will go out and get my breath while you describe me to him. You can describe so beautifully when you have a mind to," she coaxed.

" Alas !" she concluded, " that Judith Kent should live to fear a man so much ; but you have managed to make the image of this one terrible to me."

" Don't be alarmed, my dear," counseled Madame, who could but notice how rapidly the nervous, quivering red and white flashed in and out of the girl's face, " John King is too much a judge of women to

be willing to accept my description ; he would like to have a more precise idea than I can give of you."

"At least, I will have an entrance !" replied Judith, whose disposition was wilful, and before madame could protest she had left the room.

It was as she averred; she felt unusually nervous, and strangely reluctant to meet John King. Not so much because the dignified poise of her own self-estimation was disturbed, as that a secret and nameless dread of an unknown presence filled her with superstitious awe of the coming interview. A subtle influence seemed to draw her, and a natural fear to repel her every time she thought of him. She felt certain she would know him ; for this purpose she left the room intending to pass casually through the parlor where he was probably sitting ; if, when she saw him, the curious sensation of attraction and repulsion continued to operate upon her feelings, she would trust her intuition so far as to decline the proposed interview.

In accordance with this intention to put her first impression of the manager to a private test, she ran lightly down the stairs ; when near the bottom she tripped, and would have dashed her face upon the tessellated floor, had not the quick hand and arm of a gentleman, who had just entered the hall, interposed to prevent her fall.

In blushing confusion Judith gathered herself up. "You have saved me from a fall, for which I must thank you," she acknowledged with an attempt at dignity that was lost in the merry glance of her hazel eyes. With a keen, searching look that comprehended every detail of her charming face and figure, John King raised his hat.

"I have never performed a worthier action than to serve to your advantage," he replied, with elaborate politeness. A subtle meaning in the words did not escape Judith's sensitive ear. She did not like the

remark ; it sounded bitter and sinister from the lips of a man who appeared very much of a gentleman.

"It is he," thought Judith, whose intuitions were often phenomenal ; and with one of those impulses which often surprised and fascinated her friends, she put out her slim white hand.

"I am Judith Kent," she said.

A smile of pleasure lighted his grave features, as he accepted the hand thus offered in friendly greeting.

"I am John King," he replied. "It is a little singular that—," he hesitated.

"I should fall into your arms, Mr. King," laughingly supplemented Judith.

"I was about to say that we should meet so informally."

"Come this way," continued Judith, as she commenced to ascend the stairs, "you wish to see Madame De Sequeria, I believe."

"Dear Madame, I have brought your visitor to you," Judith announced as she re-entered the room with King.

"Mr. King !" Madame exclaims, and with a pretty, graceful movement she came forward. "Where did you meet?" she inquired, looking at Judith's still rather confused and blushing face. King explained the incident in a few brief words.

"Judith dear, has Mr. King seen your performance?"

"Both Savelli and I have had that pleasure," King replied, when Judith had looked at him inquiringly.

"Ah, then," Madame continues, "you know what she can do ; I think, dear, if you will leave Mr. King and me alone for awhile, we will be able to talk you over."

Thinking it a little singular that Madame should request her to be absent from her own business,

Judith rises rather slowly with an expression of indecision trembling upon her lips, but concludes she will make no protest, as she reluctantly leaves the room.

Madame seats herself a little nearer King, whose glance has followed the graceful figure of the girl, and into his eyes has come a look of abstraction. He glances up pleasantly into Madame's face as she places her hand upon his and asks, "Pretty, is she not?"

"Very," answers King.

"I have known you long enough," Madame continues, "to read that Sphinx-like face of yours; I knew you were impressed the moment you two entered the room; to me you seemed not unlike a prisoner led captive," and she laughed lightly.

John King shrugged his shoulders. "Bah!" he ejaculates, "you know very well I have no patience with women."

"I know, King, that your experience with one woman has been unpleasant, that does not justify you in treating all women as though they were turned out of the same mould. I knew you well in the old days," and Madame pauses, "after your rather sad adventure in Boston."

"Madame!" interrupts King, with an unusual show of emotion, and a quiver in his strong voice.

"My heart ached for you then," pursues Madame De Sequeria hastily, who ignores King's aversion to the subject he never discusses.

Madame De Sequeria refers to these bitter memories because by this means she hopes to break that icy reserve, which does not admit of too free speech with John King concerning his private life.

"I do not know how deep the ruin then wrought has gone, but this I do know; I am putting into your hands, almost under your very protection, an innocent, pure-minded girl; that you are at least impressed with her is very patent to me. Oh!" with a

slight gesture of remonstrance as King is about to reply, "of course, how deeply I do not know. The profession is hard for a woman; you know it better than I, John King, but for a girl as sweet and innocent as this one," Madame De Sequeria pauses to steady her voice, "It is Hell!"

"Will you inform me, Madame, why a good woman seeks a profession so trying to virtue as to make her very success dependent upon doubtful conditions?" King's chin is resting upon his bosom, and his strong eyes regarding Madame De Sequeria cynically, as he puts the sharp question, with almost insulting emphasis upon "*Good Woman*," "why does she remain upon the stage?" Madame De Sequeria who always resents this mood in King, bridles a little as she interrupts:

"Why does she remain upon the stage? There are a hundred reasons why a woman adopts our profession: you might ask why I put her under such management as yours, and I should answer, she is ambitious; so far she has been particularly fortunate, as in this instance. How frequently a girl struggles on for years waiting for the opportunity which now apparently is Judith Kent's."

John King commences characteristically to gnaw the end of his moustache as he deliberates this point.

"Yes, without doubt she will do." A serious, almost a sad expression comes into his eyes as he adds: "I think you may trust me"

There is a little solemn pause broken by a merry voice, calling from without, "Oh, please, isn't this mysterious council of ten over yet?"

"Yes, dear! you may come." As Judith enters, Madame takes the girl's face tenderly in her hands. "And it is decided in your favor." She kisses her.

For a moment the girl stands a little breathless with excitement, then without a word she stretches out both hands to King. He takes them, saying, "I

wish you joy and happiness in the engagement." And so after a brief business transaction between them he bade the ladies farewell.

CHAPTER VI.

"CANNOT secure Miss Kent for three weeks, have sent on Bob," was the wire John King sent to Savelli.

Now Bob and "Anne of Austria," hardly seem synonymous terms ; however, Bob, who shall be nameless other than Bob, had played through repertoire after repertoire ; everything was at her finger's end or concealed in the vast spaces of her brain. She had retired from the stage and a position as professional beauty (although the Broadway shops still exhibit her photographs), to run a chicken farm a little way out of New York. When, however a star found himself in want of a leading woman temporarily, Bob was in demand. She was always welcomed with open arms, because the comfort of others was of more interest to her than anything else, bless her !

The boys were her worshipers, one and all, and many a star who only breathed freely when Bob was in the leading rôles, wished with heart and soul that she had more vanity, and less fondness for chickens ; but Bob was a born farmer, who had never been able to follow the natural bent of her mind until the last two years. Acting and professional beautyism were not in her line ; the chicks were.

The day of Bob's departure, King had entered the hotel, when a boy approached and handed him a card. It was Judith Kent's.

"So she has arrived," and an almost boyish brightness beamed in his face as he presented himself to her.

"And now shall I take you to the maestro?" King inquired, after the usual pleasant questions had been asked in regard to her journey.

"You may present me to the maestro," she acquiesced; "I shall be outwardly charmed, but secretly frightened."

"There is surely nothing to be frightened about; he is remarkably gentle and kind, at least outside the theatre," King replied.

"I shall look to you for protection," Judith Kent smiled as she slipped into her jaunty seal coat, touched the pretty wavy hair, smiled pleasantly at her reflection in the mirror, and then said: "There I think I am ready," so they went out together.

"Do you speak Italian?" King asked.

"Not at such a time as this," Judith Kent replies as they arrive at Savelli's door.

A pleasant, deep-toned voice bade them enter.

Judith Kent never forgot her first impression of this man. To her Savelli looked like some Greek god, with his majestic figure drawn to its full height, his classical head covered with thick, black curls, and his eyes, the most wonderful eyes that ever magnetized an audience, turned slightly upwards, suggested tragedy instead of the jolly, rollicking "D'Artagnan," the only rôle in which Judith Kent had ever seen him. There was about him the haughty dominance of a king, combined with noble generosity and rare good fellowship; of commanding presence, pure and noble character, he was a figure to pose in heroic action, and an ideal situation.

"Allow me to introduce Miss Kent, Mr. Savelli." There was an honest pride in John King's voice as he

presented Judith Kent, and he added, in order to put the girl at her ease, "She is afraid of you, Sandro."

"Afraid! afraid!" Savelli repeats, and laughs genially. "But she must not be afraid, and of what, of what?" and he laughs again.

At the spectacle of these two men enjoying her confusion, Judith Kent glances imploringly at King.

"It is not fair," she says at last, with a charmingly pathetic look in her eyes.

"Ah! there, we must not tease you. King, you will find, Miss Kent, believes but little in women; he is most ungallant in fact in his opinion of your sex."

"I protest, Savelli, my beliefs and disbeliefs are my own private property, I do not take them out, Miss Kent, on public parade."

"Neither do I, Mr. King," replied Judith, cautiously, "but I sometimes share my convictions with my friends."

"Such a partnership would bring about a division of opinion. Your friends will borrow somewhat from you, and you will resign something to share their convictions. Such a communism of ideas would eventually destroy the charm of individuality."

"Ah!" responded Judith, with merry sarcasm, as she prepared to defend herself, "I have at last discovered why some people are so choice of their confidence, Mr. King. They have not sufficient continuity of thought to hold themselves together under adverse opinion."

"Let us talk of the new rôles," requests Savelli, as he remarked how steadily John King stood regarding his lovely antagonist.

"Yes indeed!" Judith replies. "Mr. King is not included in the new rôles?" she asks, with a minor quality in her voice.

"No ; we shall dispense with his presence altogether," with which Savelli glances up smilingly.

"Good-bye, King, we will see you at dinner." King closes the door leaving Savelli and Judith Kent together. A feeling of freshness, a new life pervades him ; it is like spring, the atmosphere this girl brings with her ; he is at home once more with the birds singing in the orchard ; the yellow crocuses are in bloom, and tiny blades of grass are peeping out of the warm brown earth : he hears his mother's voice repeating the soft "Thee" and "Thou," and all the world is fresh and young.

While dressing for dinner, he finds himself singing Rubenstein's "Thou art like unto a flower ;" he hums it as he goes down to dinner to find Judith Kent perfectly at ease continuing a bright, animated conversation with Savelli.

"Miss Kent is a pupil of Senac's, King," Savelli remarks, as King seats himself, with a graceful bow, at the table.

"Yes?" King interrogates, "And can she fence?"

"Can she fence?" laughs Savelli, "Well, we will see to-morrow ; before rehearsal you may come in and judge for yourself."

"Mr. Savelli is very kind," says Judith, with a touch of young ladyish stiffness in the speech. "I fear I have forgotten a great deal, and Mr. Savelli was good enough to offer me assistance in freshening my memory a bit. It is excellent exercise. Do you fence, Mr. King?"

"King has no accomplishments in any of the manly arts, Miss Kent," Savelli explains.

Judith Kent notices how frequently Savelli adopts the light tone of banter toward King, as though he sought to withdraw him from his characteristic reserve. They are now joined by a few more pleasant members, of what appears to Judith to be a very

delightful company. As it is Sunday, and there is no performance, they sit chatting and eating, until some one realized that it is nearly ten o'clock ; with many pleasant words to Judith, who has made a decided impression upon them all, they separate.

Judith Kent's feelings toward King is still difficult to analyze. She finds herself both attracted and repelled. She falls asleep at length, to dream that two strong arms are drawing her down, down, down toward unfathomable depths. She awakes in a cold perspiration, breathing with difficulty, with a vague impression that although she saw no face in her dream, the hands were white and delicate, yet a man's hands, and not unlike John King's.

CHAPTER VII.

ANDRE DORÉE.

IN accordance with the plans of the management, the company en route for Denver arrived there on the 26th of March. Judith was in a bad humor and showed it, as she did all of her variable moods. She was a morbidly sensitive creature, so that every circumstance of life wrought some powerful change in her feelings, that produced a corresponding physical effect. It had been her misfortune to occupy a berth just opposite to Andre Dorée, a member of the company, and to witness a little by-play between that young woman and a certain gentleman who followed the company like some sort of an illegal attaché ; this had made Judith uncomfortable for the entire night.

"Shall I never become accustomed to it?" com-

plained the poor girl bitterly, as she clasped her hands across her tired eyes. "Ah, my God! these fool women!"

All night long the fair companion of her weary speculations fretted upon her restless pillow; and in the morning, when Judith looked she discovered that the girl's eyelids were red and blistered with the hot rain of grief that had poured steadily from a breaking heart through a night of suppressed anguish.

Judith did not approve Dorée, having recognized her as one of the attachées of the stage whose position has been purchased for the convenience of a lover, who is willing to pay a considerable price for the public display of his fancy. In short, Andre Dorée was a woman with a price. She had always about her an air of mystery; no one had the slightest knowledge of her early life. At present she was surrounded by every luxury, supplied by a rich Californian. She had remained upon the stage simply as a pastime, and was as unfit for the companionship of Judith Kent as could well be imagined. The woman did not understand the distance between herself and this girl, conscious only of an embarrassed, uncomfortable feeling when with her; she attributed it to the girl's inexperience.

Andre Dorée victorious was indifferent to the prudish notions of a woman who counted her odd change at night, and carefully considered the expenditure of their means as Judith did. One who might be hungry and cold to-morrow, on account of the turn of a manager's fancy, or because one had stepped before the star in public favor. Andre Dorée could see but one way for the women of the stage; gold and the favor of men who held and compelled them as so many bonded slaves. Andre Dorée never went hungry or cold. The indispensable luxuries of the parlor, the salon, the public parade and the bed-chamber—ah,

if she had a grief, there it was concealed between the silk and linen of her couch. It was at least the beautiful grief of exquisite surroundings, not a poor, miserable sorrow of one apartment under the eaves. Andre Dorée could not exist in the confined atmosphere of poverty. She preferred the elegant wretchedness of the heart to the more material wretchedness of the stomach. She could see but one way and took it, it might be a poor way, but there were meaner conditions. Andre Dorée was a butterfly in the summer air. Her summer was short, winter was near ; yet she despised all conventional things which makes the stupid lives of what the world calls good women.

As she brushes back her bright hair, she observes that her eyelids are swollen and red. She has found in Paris a lotion with which heart-sick women doctor their eyes. She turns the contents of a vial upon a lace handkerchief and pats her eyelids softly with it, then dries them with a little dash of exquisitely scented powder. When she opens them again to take critical account of repairs, she seems to sense a near presence, and turns her head, with a vain, bird-like motion, to meet the serious and sorrowful look of Judith Kent.

"Mercy, child !" she exclaims with a dainty affectation of manner and speech, "how tragic ; how ill you look !"

"Strange ! that I should display your life in my face, Andre Dorée !" Judith delivers this little speech with such a strong quiver of emotion, thrilling through her rich young voice ; Andre Dorée is uncertain whether it expresses sympathy or contempt. As Judith leaves the car she stands with her bonnet in her hand staring after her half angrily.

"A fine piece of impertinence !" she exclaims as she hears the station called for the second time, when

she hurries her lovely head into her bonnet. Notwithstanding her vexation, the remark has impressed her, and she repeats it like a grieved child, while descending the steps of the car to meet once more the cause of her secret sorrow. No longer secret. She thinks of the ostrich which hides its head in the sand when the enemy pursues. This girl had heard last night, she knows, this Judith, that the plumage which makes life gay is being plucked at the heart.

"She looks my life!" sighs Andre Doreé, as she puts out her gloved hand to meet the clasp of her friend's—so he is called; her friend, and he is just now her bitterest enemy, at once her grape cup and her death cup.

"What! Are you sad again, sweetheart?" he inquires. "We are together, that surely should make you happy; and what you will, Andre, as usual, if I may be counted among your luxuries."

As he delivers this speech, which is so stupid, she knows that he is not thinking about her at all. He hands her, with a great show of gallant attention, into a splendid coupé, looking about uneasily as he does so. He makes no move to take his accustomed place at her side, but stands, an elegant and handsome figure before her, with his hat raised for farewell.

"Henri! Henri!" she almost gasps the name, as she leans her poor, blanched face out of the carriage.

"You will come with me, will you not?"

At that moment Judith Kent passes the carriage in company with Savelli and John King. An animated conversation is going on between them. Once more the eyes of the two women meet, and that pitying, half tragic expression of Judith's face causes Andre Doreé to draw herself up with a show of resentment toward Judith as she assumes an indiffer-

ence to the situation which she feels sure Miss Kent comprehends too well.

She nods and smiles upon the manager as he stops for a moment by the carriage to exchange greetings with the gentleman addressed as Henri.

"King," he says, hurriedly, as he catches a glimpse of a petite figure moving slowly down the platform of the station; "Will you do me the favor to accompany Miss Dorée to Brown's Palace?"

King hesitates a moment, as he had set himself another task, of looking after Miss Kent, a slight labor of interest. He regarded Judith somewhat in the light of a new toy with which to relieve the tedium of a dry, business experience, one of the exciting details of it, in fact. It gave some interest to the chase that the proposed victim could not be coaxed, impressed and enticed by the usual means, but must be pursued and overcome.

Judith looks back indifferently and decides the case by taking a carriage in company with Savelli.

The next moment John King is whirled along the same road in company with Andre Dorée. The unfortunate young woman at his side has so far perfected herself in the power of self-control she is enabled to keep up a brilliant show of happiness as falsely simulated as her heartless smiles. She says many witty things, which makes the drive rather a pleasant one for the manager, who looks for nothing better than entertainment in his association with women.

In the meantime, Savelli and Judith Kent, whom the young actor admires greatly, chatted together concerning those themes which appeared most important to them.

"Yonder," said Savelli, is Pike's Peak; have you ever been in Denver before, Miss Kent?" The young actor sat slightly leaning forward with his hands

upon his knees, looking up at the range of mountains, with their crowning eminence so suggestive of the life he sought to live ; cold, immaculate, and lofty, glowing with the fires of a splendid genius which should dazzle, and raise the eyes of the world to an impressive contemplation of the majestic achievements of man in the world of art.

Judith, who was always womanly and sympathetic, read his thoughts, and answered them instinctively.

"Mr. Savelli, if I was as sure as you are, of reaching that sunlit peak, I could endure with more courage, and struggle with greater fortitude to reach a point above the world, where all the summer flowers are dead, and life is as cold as it is grand and lofty, and isolated. It is my desire, it is perhaps, my impossible dream," she concluded, with pathetic enthusiasm.

Savelli turned his glowing and wonderful eyes upon Judith's delicate, spiritual face, whose every lineament seemed tremulous with emotion.

"Ah, my dear ! how can I be sure of such attainment ? time has more than one sickle to cut off a man's earthly career," then smiling at some inner reflection concerning himself, which he wished to have verified by her : "Tell me, Miss Kent, do you subscribe to the plaudits of the press ; do you think my performances great conceptions ?"

"Whether I speak from judgment, or from some subtle sympathy with you and your work, I do not know ; but to me you are marvelous at times."

"Only at times, then ?" queried Savelli, a little disappointed at the girl's innocent candor. She saw that she had made a mistake ; the lion must not be punched, he must be fed.

"Pardon my boldness ; my inexperience," she pleaded with such pretty grace, as she touched his hand lightly, with the tips of her fingers, her face suf-

fused with conscious color, and her great hazel eyes filling with tears.

"Rather than that I should make such bad speeches to you, Mr. Savelli, please tell me if I may hope to have my moderate ambition gratified. I do not expect, of course, to be Savelli, but I would like to become Judith Kent. Just now Judith Kent is only a dream. If Judith Kent is only the bead on the top of the bumper, if the real depths are beneath her and the real heights beyond her, why the sooner she is smacked off by the lips of old Father Time the better for Judith Kent and the world generally; but I do assure you," she went on breathlessly, "that Judith Kent has her ambitions to do something worthy of the gift of life."

"Are you religious, Miss Kent?" inquired Savelli, "pardon me, I will answer the other question later on."

"Well that depends, perhaps, on what you would consider to be religious."

"Perhaps I have not given sufficient thought to the subject to define my own convictions, but I should say it was subscribing to the Church creed."

"What church?" inquired Judith, still looking at him with her frank, searching eyes, and a little straight line of puzzled inquiry drawn between her brows.

"Mercy, Miss Kent!" laughs Savelli, "I cry for quarter. I am only too glad to take up the other subject. I will say that I have studied you both on and off the stage; and during your performances with me, I have found you insecure. I do not think that you have the temperament which can endure exposure to drudgery and the discouraging, I might almost say, the disgusting details of our profession. At times, when the conditions are right you do splendid

work ; you are then truly remarkable ; and again, you are disappointing. You depend so entirely upon your inner life, you are like a flash of electricity, but sometimes the circuit gets broken, and no amount of forcing will then produce the necessary fire. You are like a watch, with works so fine, although perfectly adjusted, that it gets easily disordered. With judgment to accept, an appropriate discipline, and a will to pursue any particular line of work you adopt, you agree to give the time correctly, but the management will pick you up one night when the hour is most important to you both, and find your life motionless, your hands idle. He will look inside to discover that the mainspring is broken, and both are ruined. Do you understand, Miss Kent ? I have been as frank with you as I would be with my own sister ; you are too thoroughly a proud, pure, sensitive woman, to ever become a great and successful actress."

"Oh, dear !" half sobbed Judith, "I feel as though I was going to die ; with this knell to my hopes ringing in my ears, how will it ever be possible for me to appear with credit this evening ?"

The tears dropped so fast from her thick lashes, that she pressed her handkerchief against her veil. They had now reached the door of the hotel, and both dismounted at the same moment that John King and Andre Dorée arrived. "There is the disgusting part of the profession," complained Judith, fretfully, with a contemptuous glance in the direction of Miss Dorée ; "at least, I have some reserve of self-respect. I am not a fool, thank God ! and I hate women who are !"

"What is the trouble with Miss Dorée?" asks Savelli, "I notice you do not seem to get on well together."

At this remark, Judith grew red, and full of just wrath, to think that Savelli should utter her name in the same breath with Dorée's. It seemed an insult to

her honest womanhood she could not peaceably endure.

"Mr. Savelli!" she paused in the middle of her speech, aware that it was not becoming to discuss Miss Dorée's character on the ground of self-defense. She turned sharply away from her companions, and walked proudly before them into the hotel.

Later Savelli taxed King with the same question he had asked Judith.

"What is the trouble with Miss Dorée, King? Miss Kent seemed greatly offended this morning when I spoke to her."

King frowned under the shadow of his hat. "They are a pretty little nest of kittens, who must in their frolics together, get mad and scratch each other, I suppose."

The opening night in Denver found John King in the best of humors. Savelli was, perhaps, the most popular attraction that visited the city, and King gazed with much satisfaction over the crowded house. In immaculate evening dress he had smiled upon newspaper people and a few society friends; as the orchestra rang in he made his way to Savelli's dressing-room. Savelli was putting the last touches to the pale, pathetic visage of Ruy Blas. The mirror reflected the eyes downcast, sombre. Without turning he asserted rather than interrogated: "Good house, King?"

"Splendid," John King responded, briefly.

"Kent ought to impress them," Savelli continued, as he arose from his chair; then, in reply to the inquiry of the stage manager as to whether he was ready, he answered: "All right, Hastings, ring up."

"I think she will," King rejoined, while Savelli hurried to the stage, and in response to the cue: "Ruy—Ruy—Ruy Blas," made his entrance 'mid a tumult of applause.

King left Savelli's room and walked down the

passageway ; stopping at the farther end he knocked at a door. The voice of Andre Dorée bade him enter. King noticed there were traces of something more than vexation upon her face. Something which made the hard lines visible even beneath the make-up. The assumed tone, the sparkling eyes, and the pretty, quick gestures, only made it appear more ghastly to one who understood. As King accepted the invitation to be seated, Andre Dorée turned to put the finishing touches to her make-up.

After a moment's silence she asked, with an unsuccessful attempt to treat the matter lightly, "Is Henri here?"

King sits in a negligent attitude, watching the world-tired and weary face curiously. His ear catches and defines the tremulous accent of doubt that betrays a hint of tears in her voice.

"No, he is not," he replies, much as a vivisectionist would have made a passionless thrust of the knife.

The woman catches her breath sharply between her teeth as she averts her head. King smiles cynically, he is evidently in an unpleasant frame of mind.

"Not quarreled, I hope, Andre?" he inquires, "or perhaps there is another?"

As he says this, he studies the expression of life and feeling in the woman's face. He does not really believe that it will hurt her, he has no faith in women ; he believes that she will shrug up her pretty shoulders, just now gleaming white as ivory above her low corsage, pout her pretty lips, shed a few tears, and console herself to-morrow with another. "Ah, God!" he thinks to himself, "how heart sickening it all is, this splendid show of sweet life in a woman, and its hollowness, its false depths." He is surprised by the effect of his words ; the woman wheels suddenly upon him with a passion of a tigress in her face.

John King is saved from a rather embarrassing po-

sition by a knock at the door. Upon opening it, a messenger boy enters, bearing a great box of flowers.

In childish delight Andre Dorée claps her hands, as King unwraps the flowers.

"Undoubtedly," Dorée thinks, as the superb American Beauties are taken carefully out by King, "he has sent some message with the flowers." She eagerly snatches the card which King passes her, it reads simply, "compliments of Henri!" "Cruel, cruel," she mutters beneath her breath.

"They are beautiful!" John King says as he arranges them with an appreciative care he displays toward all flowers, excepting white lilies. There is no reply from Andre as she leaves the room to go upon the stage. John King, his task completed, stands back to view the effect; his eyes grow critical and he twirls a corner of his moustache for a moment; in this contemplative attitude, he is interrupted by a voice at his elbow asking, "Admiring my flowers, hey?"

He turns to find Henri standing there.

"Yes," King replies.

"Miss Dorée is on the stage?" the man interrogates.

"But she will be with you in a moment; the act is nearly over." King bows courteously as he leaves the room.

"Yes, I think the act is nearly over!" smiles Henri, as he picks up one of his roses and pins it in the button-hole of his coat; he looks at himself in the mirror; twists the waxed end of his moustache, and begins to turn over the trinkets of the dressing table.

"I wonder what the closing scene will be? These women sometimes kick up a devil of a rumpus.

"Ah, there she is, *ma petite*! She has pretty little tricks that tickle a man's blood, the sly little witch! and it is a damned shame! but the governor would cut me off without a sou, if I dared to marry her."

There is a sound of light footsteps down the passage, and rustle of skirts, as the door is softly opened, when Dorée throws herself into his arms, crying, "Henri! Henri! I am so glad! I am so glad! I thought you had forgotten!"

"No, I had not forgotten," the man replies. The woman's lips press his passionately. "Dear, don't think me foolish; but I have been so wildly, miserably jealous; and there was no cause, no cause whatever, was there?" she queries eagerly.

"No, indeed!" he lies coolly, but turns his handsome head from her; it is more than difficult to meet her searching glance.

"Open the door, dear," he suggested, hoping to divert her attention. "The room is warm." As she moves to comply with his request, King and Miss Kent are passing, and in her momentary, fleeting happiness, she feels a kindliness toward the whole world.

"Come in and rest a moment, Miss Kent," she urged, and then added: "Enter the King and the Queen, and I will crown you with roses. No," as Judith and King have accepted her invitation—Judith with more than a slight misgiving—"the King shall crown you; what do you say to that? You have not met my friend, Miss Kent? let me make you acquainted." After they have been properly introduced she assumes her most bewitching air as hostess, as she continues: "There you are King," and passes him a handful of roses.

King glances into Judith Kent's eyes with an amused smile.

"Do you agree, Miss Kent?" There is a clamor from Henri and Andre, that she must agree.

"It seems too much like anticipating what I would become, Mr. King."

Without changing his position or desisting from his pretty labor, King glanced up interrogatively.

"A victor, not a queen," she explained, with an air of pride and coldness.

"Surely !" he responded, with an expression of pleasant amusement lighting his grave features, "you will allow me then in compliment to place upon your regal young brow the sign of my approbation and belief in your future greatness."

To her sensitive ear the tone and character of this speech betrayed a cynical disbelief in her claim. With the straight mark of displeasure appearing between her delicate brows, she betrayed his power to irritate her by the shortness of her bitter reply.

"Your praise would have to be earned like my bread, Mr. King, and both, I fear, would come scantily, if one was dependent on the other." With which the offended young actress would have left the dressing-room, where the moral atmosphere seemed to stifle the free exercise of the sweet qualities of her nature ; but—

"Wait a moment," interrupted King. "I wish to speak to you, Miss Kent, when I have finished the crown, and cast my offering at your feet ; you are surely too kind, I think, not to stoop a little."

He laughed with such an expression of good humor, that Judith hesitated a moment, smiling, as she leaned against the open door, while Andre Dorée, who looked precisely like a dainty wax woman, into whom God had put a sweet, flashing soul, leaned forward toward her lover ; her eyes fixed on his, a sparkle with humor and happiness ; her white, jeweled arm thrown carelessly across his knee.

"Do you know," she commenced—"Do you know—I dreamed a dream last night ! to-day it has lived in my thoughts : It was, that I was a Princess, with a white marble palace upon the shore of the Mediter-

anean." The hands of Andre Dorée, so expressive of luxury, waved about in flashing gestures.

"I would have"—she passes her hand across her brow—"ah, let me see, yes"—At first she speaks with hesitation as she endeavors to gather the fragments of her dream. "The long, broad walks are shaded by palms"—here she pauses. "You can smell the fragrance of the cinnamon and orange flowers, oh, but you can, Mr. King," as that gentleman shrugs his shoulder. "The odor is heavier than the roses you have in your hands," and she laughs merrily. "You can hear the soft play of the fountains—no"—as King is about to speak—"it is not audible to your ears, Mr. King, because—there, Miss Kent, do a deed of charity, Mr. King seized that rose by the stem, a wounded finger demands your attention." She looks at Judith, who takes no notice of the remark, haughtily retaining her position by the door. King declares it is nothing, while Andre asks, "Where was I? oh, yes, I remember." The little human butterfly having once stretched her wings to the gauzy air of fancy, felt the stimulus of her own whimsical mood as it commenced to operate upon her listeners. "Bright birds," she continues, "flit across a sky of sapphire blue;" at this point she adopts a listening poise. "There is the soft distant roll of the waves, and the song of my gondoliers." She drops her attitude of attention and glances at the faces of her audience. It was like the fizz of so much champagne, to see them all attentive and eager. She lived by the beat of human hearts and the tide must ever flow her way. "I would have slaves," she continued, in a tyrannical, commanding tone; rising as she speaks, she stamps a dainty foot upon the floor imperiously. Surely a most despotic princess her listeners think. Henri winces a little as he realizes how far that air of despotism could be carried, if put to the test.

Clasping her hands above her head, she takes a few turns up and down the room.

"You are there, Henri?" and she cast toward him a look of tormenting witchery.

"A slave?" he asks, while Judith and King exchange glances; both feel the spell this woman casts about her by these flashes of poetical imagination.

"Nay! nay!" and she seats herself once more at the man's feet. "Not a slave; my prince," and she touches his hand with the very tips of her fingers; "but listen," her eyes grow earnest with deep feeling, as her imagination becomes more vivid, "there is a room of malachite beyond the onyx hall; from the ceiling hang jeweled lamps suspended by chains of gold." She smiles, feeling the touch of caressing fingers upon her hair. "Soft velvet couches, luxurious chairs, rare tropical plants fill the apartments; all is sensuous, dream-like," as she ends the sentence the woman's face is a study, the hard lines have disappeared; the eyes are far seeing like a child's. Judith felt at that moment she could love and teach her better things.

Andre intuitively realizes the charm she is imparting, as she continues in a soft, musical voice, that is like the muffled chime of silver bells.

"At night when all the slaves have crept to rest," she bows her head slightly, "wait for me in the room of malachite, my prince; I will come to you clad in a robe made of a million silver links, she lifts her face to her lover's, "I raise my hand to my right shoulder," see Henri, "a blaze of light radiates from every link; I stand before you like some mythical goddess, when suddenly I raise my hand to my left shoulder;" there she pauses, Judith's frank eyes are fixed upon her, King is busy with the wreath, but listening; Henri smiles while watching this sybarite, this pleasure-lov-

ing woman. There is a breathless silence as she sends forth a flashing glance from beneath her golden lashes, "and then!" she laughs recklessly, "and then"—whereupon she drops her face upon Henri's knee.

"That is my cue I think," says Judith Kent sharply, as she leaves the room with a scornful glance at the bowed head of Andre. John King drops the roses and follows Miss Kent.

As he closes the door behind him, the passionate face of the woman, as sweet and delicate as a flower, is raised to the embrace of her lover, who bends fondly down to whisper: "My sweetheart!"

Despite Judith's fear concerning the opening night, the scene in the dressing-room had served to rouse a sort of a fire in her spirit calculated to withdraw her thoughts from her self. Situations like these always had the effect of bringing her own character into sharp contrast with those whom she regarded as occupying a lower plane, and while she experienced both the pain of disappointment for them, and the sympathy of a gentle womanly nature, there were other elements which wrought for self-righteousness in her.

She had a sort of fiery and grand contempt for that which rang false, or was less true and noble than herself.

Fortunately for her temper she did not see all the evil of life; in fact, it was not what she sought to know, and consequently she never beheld it until it was forced upon her recognition. Then she was inclined to be bitter and cynical, as if to her was delegated the office of searcher and avenger.

Her mind had that charm of unripeness which displayed at once youthful folly and indecision, in connection with rare judgment and decision. Her character was marked by that transition from girlhood

to womanhood which prophesied great qualities when experience had tested her strength and settled her opinions.

With an air of lofty dignity with which she felt herself for the time invested, she went through the acts of the play before thousands of spectators, with an appreciation of every little detail of movement and expression that won the applause of the house and divided the honors of the evening.

But like all mercurial and emotional beings, when the curtain rang down and she stood in the semi-darkness of the great stage where she had been called by a final encore, the light and music and movement seemed to vanish suddenly from her own young, fresh, impulsive life. She stood for a moment alone, hearing the dull murmur and push of the departing audience and, floating through one of the wings from Andre Dorée's dressing-room, the sweet, happy laugh of the child woman, who was once again consoled by the tenderness of her lover.

Something ached in the desolate young heart flung out to the world without a protecting arm or any close particular love. The woman in her felt weak ; she longed for a moment to cast herself down even as this Dorée had done, if in the fall she might find the broad bosom like a shield and the true heart like a citadel.

With the great shining folds of her brown hair falling loosely about her delicate face, she stood thus pensively meditating ; her head bent down, her richly robed and elegant figure, like some glowing and glorious basrelief cut against the shadowy background of the gorgeous stage scenery, as Alessandro and John King came by different entrances upon the stage, at the same moment.

John King, cold, grave, dignified ; with a crown of yellow roses in his hand ; Alessandro with his face

shining, his eyes full of passionate fire, his hands warmly outstretched. With that morbid revulsion of feeling which occurs when the overstrained tension of our nerves gives way, and everything gets so distorted as to present terrifying visions of life, that but yesterday was as a butterfly in the air, a flower in the sunshine, Judith saw only Alessandro descending upon her night, like some great and glowing planet. Without reason, excepting a sudden rush of girlish confidence in something more strong and steady than herself, she flung herself like a passionate and tired child, into his outstretched arms. Ashamed, but too overcome to control herself, she pressed her white face against his shoulder sobbing hysterically. The young Italian, whom God had so nobly gifted with true instincts and refined sensibilities, understood that the trembling figure he so tenderly supported against his bosom was racked by tired nerves. It was not herself quite, but the depressing influence and natural revulsion which occurs often after intense excitement. In his large, and tender manliness he treated her as a weary child. It gave Alessandro a place in Judith's estimation no man had ever held before.

"You are tired, my dear," he said very gently, "but I can scarce regret it, since you trust me so much and will never again be afraid of me—no, do not try to talk just yet—you will be better in a few minutes, and the breast of Ruy Blas will have been richly pearled by the tears of a sweet woman."

All the time he was talking he kept one arm about her waist, as he passed his disengaged hand gently across her hair; his head bent down to her until his beautiful black curls mingled with the soft fluff of her brown hair.

To John King this scene, which he could but witness, bore a false import that excited all the bitterest

impulses of his nature. It was like a flash-light of memory, presenting Alice Beecham and Paul Astor, when he had been for the first time a witness to a man's successful love making, where his own heart's interest was so deeply concerned. He had come upon the stage with a pretty compliment upon his lips, and the becoming gift of a crown to greet the victorious actress, only to find Alessandro before him, and preferred. He turned contemptuously about, flung the crown upon the floor, purposely trampling out the delicate life of the flowers with which he had intended to honor Judith, as both moody and angry he left the theatre.

With Eileen his love nature had flowed without hindrance and ebbed without storm from a barren shore. He had derived little except pastime, and experienced no pain other than that overflow of sympathy for the fancied misery of a woman who seemed to him unfit for any other use than that of trifling.

Often since, women had offered themselves for his pleasure, and he had been sensible enough to hold the reins a little tighter over the lower impulses of his nature, because the little, tender love making he gave and they offered, suffered such comparison with other scenes and possibilities which engaged his mind, he did not consider the complication worth the trouble it cost to break the tie. He supposed the scene he had just left in the theatre, of Judith Kent in the arms of Alessandro, pained him only because it placed the girl on the level with Dorée and all the rest of her false, flippant sex ; whereas, he had hoped something better for her, and it had served to bring the old withering, deadly, but delightful fascination for his cousin Alice too strongly to his present recognition.

As he was ascending the stairs of the hotel, he heard the sharp clatter of heels upon the marble below, accompanied by the merry voice of Dorée and

the young lover Henri. He did not turn his head but went straight on to his own room.

He threw off his coat and hat, took his cigar between his lips, seated himself by the window, raised his feet to the window ledge, where he sat with his square head and well-knit figure pressed in to the spongy back of the chair. His face was pale and a little grieved in its sternness; his eyelids narrowed to a line, through which his eyes shone with a steady, almost malignant fire. He sat thus through the long night doing battle with a desire which prompted him to consider the possibility of a baser course than he had ever yet pursued. When the morning broke, he gave up the battle to the nobler impulses of his nature. The angel had not pled in vain. But with surrender he grew limp and wretched; he knew better than most men the physical cost of denial to what was so strong in his corrupted manhood. He flung himself face downward upon a couch in the room.

"Curse them!" he muttered. "My love of woman and the devil in them is in danger of sending me to hell!"

It happened that Judith Kent found herself suddenly presented to John King at the breakfast table that morning. She looked at him, with her frank, sweet eyes full of kindly interest, and a pleasant speech trembling on her lips. But the manager met her glance with one so cold, even contemptuous, Judith shrank from him visibly.

"Would you like this seat, Miss Kent?" he asked, with marked reserve, as he placed the chair for her, then walked deliberately away to another table. Not being accustomed to unkind treatment, Judith sat with her cheeks aflame with angry resentment staring after him.

"It was so disrespectful, so ungentlemanly for him to act that way," she thought.

"Oh, yes," to the waiter who had twice addressed her, "bring me anything you like—I mean," she interrupted as she recovered her senses, "I would like a chop and some tea, if you please. Not coffee—tea this morning."

Then she changed her seat with a foolish display of real girlish pique; she sat with her back to the manager, so that he could not by any possible means get a glimpse of her face.

Although Judith made a decided hit in Denver, John King yet maintained his air of offensive coldness. The occasion certainly called for some recognition of her success on his part, but from him she received no word of commendation.

She often saw him in the audience watching her when on the stage, and there was always something so caustic and sinister in his face, so scornful in the strong, penetrating eyes fixed upon her, the hot blood seemed to blister her cheeks with angry defiance.

Notwithstanding the manager's apathy, both she and Savelli were entertained as much as their professional duties would permit. There were times when she felt that John King was doing double duty as showman for both.

After rehearsal on the day following the little scene in the dressing-room, Judith occupied herself with writing to Madame De Sequeria, she having received a bright, and witty epistle from that lady, in which Madame De Sequeria had set forth her travels and adventures in a most ridiculous light. But Madame always did see the ridiculous side of everything. She made life so delightful with her humors, and often, in her freaks, afforded a most charming representation of them in her own person and behavior.

She took up Madame's letter. It ran on recklessly as follows :

“DEAR JUDITH:—Why do I not get a better account of your doings? You talk lovely, my dear, but you write wretchedly, for so learned and accomplished a young person. Were you taking steps when you penned me the last unreadable? It was so jiggled and uphill, even to the address, that I vowed nothing but perpetual motion of the entire body could produce such effect in ink. You may pout, Judith, as much as you like, but you deserve it, for your bad treatment of me.

“Let me tell you, we have a tyrant for a manager, who likes to see people get on under all sorts of impossible conditions; for example: the other night my splendid gown was ruined; you would say, you dear, sweet, unsuspecting child! it was the inclemency of the weather, but I am an old stager dear, and know better. Who ever really knew inclement weather to get through the brass and iron precaution of an old stager’s trunk? I got acquainted with the weather a good many years ago, how many I should not like to tell, Judith; but I got acquainted with the manager only last month, and he has done more than all the weather created since the world wheeled under the sun, to ruin my gowns.

“Actually opened my trunk—surreptitiously on the road and poured in bucketfuls of water—to the great detriment of Emilia, who had to be taken out and pulled into shape, and dried under sore difficulties before the dressing-room fire.

“Then the star is not too brilliant or amiable, wanted me to do a soubrette part the other night in short skirts, and, dear Judith, I had left my elegant legs in Chicago. I sent back word I could not, as I had no legs for the part, but the beast roared at me in the most furious rage I ever witnessed, and swore that I should go on, legs or no legs. So I went without my legs, but drowned in a copious flood of tears.

Sometimes they both get drunk, the star and the manager together, then there are some things which move to a lively tune outside of the show. Oh, I pause right here, Judith, I cannot pursue the tale of woe I am going to Paris in the spring, what say you, *ma chère* to a trip across the ocean?"

Judith proceeded to answer this epistle.

"MY DARLING MADAME DE SEQUERIA :—I will try to write straight; it is so much less difficult than living on a straight line, I surely should guide my pen with half the skill that I manage my conduct. You will want first to know about Alessandro Savelli, and I will say that my appearance with him has been most successful, as you have no doubt been informed by the papers. He inspires and lifts one by the power of his rare genius and nobler character. The Gods have been exceptional in their benefits to the young Italian, as he seems possessed of all their graces. I am in love with him, if I know what love is, that is, I believe in and trust him thoroughly. At first he looked so grand and unapproachable, do you know I was afraid of him, but only last night, when I was overcome by my treacherous nerves, and broke down like a foolish child at the end of the last act, my confidence in this man was so instinctive, that almost before I knew what I was doing, I found myself weeping in his arms. He did and said most kindly things a woman could expect. He patted me gently on the head, as though I was a child, while I was so humiliated that I could not raise my face to look into the eyes regarding me. Talking to me gently all the while, he led me to a seat in my dressing-room; he then went into his own room to pour me a glass of wine, which you know, madame, I am much averse to drinking; but his gentle urgency was

so captivating I took it with pleasure and benefit from so considerate a hand.

"As I sat drinking the wine, he told me amusing and pathetic stories of his life, in which he painted the most delightful pictures of Italy and the Villa Savelli. I can actually see the little white court, and hear the soft splash of the fountains; I can hear the birds singing among the fragrant blossoms of the lemon trees.

"The Villa Savelli! how sweet it sounds! I wish I might go there some day; I wish I might see this great, handsome, kingly man in his own castle. Perhaps, who knows? It is my 'Castle in Spain.'

"Sometimes I am half afraid of King, he has such a piercing, compelling look in his gray eyes; and again he makes me feel withered and small in my own estimation, when he seems literally to fling out between his scornful lips some scathing remark touching me or my sex. He is, however, so much a gentleman that he invariably covers such an offence with some pretty gallantry of speech or action calculated to atone for his want of courtesy.

Then again, he has a strong, strangely silent mood, when he touches your heart in spite of your determination not to like him. He never talks of himself, and he has such self-control that he moves others greatly to his liking. I think that it is this quality in him that makes me afraid, as it seems to me that if he should attempt or get an influence over one's mind, there are strong reserves in his nature which would render him dangerous—particularly to a woman.

I call him the stony man because nothing appears to make any outward impression upon his coldness. But I see beneath the surface sometimes the awful tragedy of a human soul; and I know John King is not a happy man—why, I wonder? Yes—I think I am more sorry on final consideration, than hateful

toward him, because I cannot bear to see people suffer so much. Yes, dear madame, I think I will go to Paris with you ; but I will now get to work. More anon. Adieu, with all my fond heart,

JUDITH KENT.

P.S. Oh, I should say the company is not altogether delightful ; there is one of those monstrous affairs too common to our profession being carried on here. I am sure Alessandro does not understand, and John King is indifferent. Her position in the company has been purchased of him. J. K."

CHAPTER VIII.

JUDITH KENT was most reluctant to leave Denver ; not so with Andre Dorée. Henri had left suddenly for San Francisco with a hastily formed excuse, and for her the time dragged miserably. It was only when the company reached San Francisco that she regained her buoyancy of spirit, soon to be crushed again by a bitter disappointment. Henri had gone south ; at least, so a formal note received upon her arrival had informed her. This was followed by an assurance that he daily expected to return.

"They always commence this way when the end is near," she thought, bitterly.

San Francisco invariably gives, even to the casual observer, an idea of characteristic singularity. The hurry and life is not, perhaps, unlike any other city, but the fact in peculiar contrast is, that while with all its rush and confusion New York is conservative, in San Francisco one feels more intimately acquainted with human joys and sorrows ; kindlier, more sympathetic and considerate toward others.

Perhaps Judith Kent became insensibly affected by that bond of sympathy, which, like a silken tie, linked each one here with his fellow creatures. It was true that she bestowed a little more attention upon Andre Dorée. Whenever Andre appeared before her she could but remark how spiritless was her manner and pale her cheeks, how bitter the grief and heavy were her eyes.

She spoke with such condescending sweetness or stooping sense of superiority in her overtures, that her approaches, made on the cautious side of friendship, received from Andre Dorée the rebuke of proud silence.

Andre excused Henri's absence in various ways. They were lies, all lies, and Andre Dorée hated lies.

The days went by ; they were few in the calendar, but to Dorée, in her anxiety, they seemed a hundred years. She found herself growing thin and pale ; cruel little pains went darting through her chest, and once there were tiny flecks of blood upon the handkerchief which she removed from her lips. With gloomy apprehension of the impending future, she turned to her maid, holding up the blood-stained handkerchief :

"Oh, I think I am going like Camille," she said, with an attempt at lightness in her speech that belied the serious look in her fair, sweet face ; but the laugh that followed had scarcely left her lips when the blood poured from her mouth, staining the white gown in a way that was hideous. Victorine had sufficient presence of mind to lay Andre down, holding her to the bed almost by force.

"Do not move ! do not try to speak !" the maid implored.

"You have not sent for anyone," Andre whispered, "no one must know !"

"Oh, madame ! let me send for a physician.

"No, I shall be better, you must not tell any one, Victorine." Andre formed the words with her lips, "Do you understand?"

"*Oui*, madame," the maid answered tearfully.

In a few moments the hemorrhage ceased and Andre laid quiet, thinking how best to conceal the nature of her illness. After a while summoning the maid she dictated a brief note to King and Savelli, stating that she had a bad cold, so bad a cold that she could not pronounce her lines.

The management sent back regrets and excused her performance.

For the next few days everyone seemed busily absorbed in their own concerns. The great world moved on and left her behind, fixed in the track; she could not move on. There had suddenly ceased in her all motive power to move. The flashing Princess of the dressing-room saw her castles falling, her standard deserted by the Prince who made her kingdom. Instead of the voluptuous beauty of the palace on the Mediterranean made sweet by love, and power, and laughter, and wine, she crouched in a corner of a dull, hotel apartment, except for Victorine, unloved, unhonored, alone, deserted.

With pharisaical politeness, or something more kindly, even, in the impulse that led her to seek Andre Dorée; a silent reaching toward the unhappy woman; a wish to be kind, and generous, without inviting the freedom of intimate association, Judith Kent dressed for the street one morning, and carrying a bunch of roses in her hand, rapped at the door, intending to inquire of Victorine concerning her mistress' health.

As Victorine opened the door, she saw Andre standing behind her; but she moved out of sight immediately. Not before, however, Judith's glance had

passed over the maid's shoulder to observe how changed was Andre's appearance.

"How is Miss Dorée this morning?" she inquired.

"Not well," responded the maid, curtly, who like water in a prism, lived so wholly within the narrow circle of her mistress' life as to insensibly reflect the shades of her opinions. She did not accordingly feel very warmly disposed toward Judith Kent.

"I am very sorry; will you tell her?" and Judith hesitated. "These flowers, I thought might please her. Will you give them to her, Victorine, with my compliments, and regrets that she is ill?"

"I will," responded Victorine as she took the flowers.

"And Victorine," as the maid was about to close the door, "tell Miss Dorée that if there is anything that I can do, she is welcome to call upon me. I will get her a book or some flowers, or anything that she might like outside."

"Thank you," said Victorine, and she closed the door.

A few mornings later, while Judith was engaged with her correspondence, the door of her room was flung open with such tragic force that she sprang instantly to her feet. She confronted the alarming spectacle of Andre Dorée in a greatly disordered but charming dishabille of white, trimmed with ermine. Her cheeks had lost all color; her eyes were hollow and miserable; her face was swollen and tear-stained; the great yellow masses of her hair fell about her shoulders like a gorgeous banner of gold. She slammed the door behind her, and staggered rather than walked across the room with a paper clenched in one hand, that she thrust out toward Judith with a terrible frown of anger.

"Will you read that, Miss Kent?" she inquired, in a hard, cold voice, pointing to a marked passage. "I

think," she went on with a hysterical break in the words, "I think, perhaps, I am not quite right here;" with which she flung down the paper, and clenched her hands in her hair, walking swiftly to and fro. In a dazed frame of mind Judith mechanically picked up the paper, and began to read the marked paragraph.

"Brilliant Wedding.

"Married at the home of the bride in San Francisco, this evening, Henri Austin to Isabella Freddly."

At this point, Judith, with a feeling of compassion looked toward the excited and desperate girl.

"What is it?" she inquired. "Did I read aright? Or am I a mad creature, gone suddenly mad since last night?"

"I see," said Judith indignantly, "that Henri Austin is married."

"I loved him," Andre said, as she turned her eyes full upon Judith, with the pathetic innocence of a child, "I cannot live without him; you do not know, Judith Kent ——"

"I know that you are a woman, and I am sorry for you. Come here and sit down; let us talk together. What else could you expect?" and she attempted to place her arm around the girl's waist with the air of one condescending, which Andre resented.

"Do not touch me, you are a woman; I cannot bear it! your touch seems strange and alien to me. Why have I come to you? a woman of ice who knows nothing of the great passions between men and women!"

It was a peculiar case, that Judith did not know just how to approach. She felt as the girl said that she could not comprehend further than that this woman suffered. She was full of the righteous indignation of a virtuous young person. She thought to herself, perhaps a little unkindly, that Andre

Dorée had sown to the wind and was now reaping the whirlwind. She had no fellowship with her error. "You should have known what would be the end."

"Give me the paper!" demanded Andre after a moment of desolate consideration. "I will not be preached to at the eleventh hour," she replied with proud bitterness, as she turned to leave the room.

"You can not leave this room," said Judith decidedly, "until I know what you intend to do. You look fit for a madhouse, and I intend to put my strength between you and any new act of folly you may contemplate. I should thank God, if I were you, that I had escaped with health and beauty from a life that would soon consummate the ruin of all."

The girl turned upon her fiercely. "In this world," she went on wildly, "I have given everything, Judith Kent; what do you know of giving? You have given nothing, deserved nothing, enjoyed nothing, suffered nothing; you call that virtue?" She stopped suddenly in her restless pacing, her face a white flame of wrath. "You call that virtue? Because you have desired but have not dared, I call it cowardice!"

She rushed at Judith, with all her strength attempting to drag her from the door. "I am mad?" she shrieked in a frenzy.

"Let me go. I will teach you what is the cost of such happiness as I have won and lost, you who are too shallow to understand anything except some narrow rule which was taken with your pap. Thou shalt not lie, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit ——"

"Stop! I will not listen!" said Judith, putting her palm across the girl's ghastly lips. "I shall not allow you to impose upon me, Andre Dorée. Take your sin and your suffering as you will, so shall it be to you a blessing or a curse."

"A curse! a curse! Judith Kent, I have no rescue

in words: I am like a ship beaten by inescapable storms," she twisted her white hands together as she spoke, until the flashing diamonds cut into the tender flesh. She did indeed look like a beautiful maniac. Judith was appalled by her terrible behavior. She thought she would go and get a doctor, as it was a heart complaint for which her mind could manufacture no panacea, except rebuke and counsel both which appeared indigestible medicine.

"I think you should at least go to your room and go to bed."

"I will! I will!" she consented with a suddenly assumed quiet, as she took the paper from Judith's hand and left the room.

On the third day after Henri Austin's marriage, thinking perhaps she would feel a little better, Andre put on her cloak, then going into the street she walked across the square where the hotel was situated. She looked with dull, tear-dimmed eyes full of sharp inquiries at every person that she met. Perhaps she hoped she might see the face so dear to her. If so, she was disappointed. After a while she returned in the same covert, hunted fashion to her apartments.

Victorine had just received the tea-tray and was arranging it upon a little table.

The pale, sick woman took off her cloak, dropping it carelessly upon the floor as she sat down, staring in blank silence at the table.

"Now, now, dear madame! dear madame! You will drink this wine I have ordered? You cannot live so; you have tasted nothing for two days excepting a cup of coffee; you are as white as a dead woman."

"What is that note on the tray, Victorine?" she interrupted, in a dry, hard voice.

"That is—I don't know for sure."

"Give it to me," she commanded shortly.

Victorine obeyed. With the letter in her hand,

Andre applied the polished tip of her pointed nail to the edge of the envelope and tore it open. Inside was a note addressed to Henri Austin from the hotel. Her eyes fixed themselves in a stony stare upon the superscription, as with stiffening lips and hands that shook until the paper rustled in her fingers, she tore open the second envelope. It was the hotel bill sent to Henri Austin and returned to her unpaid. The man was not so wholly cruel as she believed ; the bill having missed him on its way, and, in the happy flight of time for him, he had forgotten it was due.

She arose, with a look of death making itself apparent even to Victorine ; the blood turned purple in her cheeks with the awful chill at her heart, as she placed her hand instinctively to her side, conscious of a dull, aching misery there that could not be reached.

"What is it, madame ! You look so wretched and you do not speak ?"

Victorine crept after her, like a faithful spaniel, with distress in her voice and tears in her eyes, as Andre walked slowly across the room and tossed the bill into the fire.

"It is my obligation to the hotel," she replied, in a cynical voice. Then she turned and looked at Victorine with an expression so determined, so wild, impressing every line of her beautiful face, the girl shrank back in terror.

"Mercy, madame ! do come and take something warm ; you frighten me, you look so unnatural."

"I am unnatural !" she said.

"Oh, madame ! dear madame !" sobbed Victorine, "take this ! take this ! I beg you, madame !" with which the maid flies back to the table, and seizing the decanter upon it, pours two-thirds of its contents into a glass, when she brings the goblet in both hands, and presents it imploringly for Andre's acceptance.

"Andre seizes it with inconsiderate haste, and

drinks it feverishly, without once taking her thirsty lips from the glass, until it is drained to the last drop. As she tips back her head, the loose coil of her hair became unfastened, and rippled like a sudden shower of gold over her white dress ; the loose sleeve of her gown, heavily trimmed with ermine, slipped up the round column of her ivory arm, leaving it bare to the elbow.

She stands thus, like a diminutive statue, cut in marble and clothed in snow, over which is flung the warm lights of a fire and the dim radiance of the chandelier. Then she reels a little, still retaining her hold of the glass ; she looks upon Victorine, she nods mockingly, laughing a cold, mirthless laugh.

"It is the life blood of human wretchedness you give me," she declares. "Since it serves to keep our miseries in circulation by making despair drunk." There is in every word she utters, every movement she makes, an appearance of madness. Her voice that was wont to be so musical, has a dry huskiness of tone as if its notes were broken and out of tune. Her smile, so bright and winsome, is sinister ; her pretty airs, and fancies are chilled by that swift winter that has come with the blasted hopes of her heart.

"I wish you would go away, Victorine, and leave me, I want to be alone, when I want you I will ring the bell."

"But madame looks so ill—if she will permit me to stay."

"Go !" she demands with a touch of her old imperiousness, but even as she speaks she reels, and the glass in her hand, falling with a crash upon the marble hearth, lay at her feet empty and broken, like her misspent life.

"I am very ill, Victorine ! I am so sick here !—" With which she places her hand against her bosom, walking weakly toward the bed. The terrified maid

hastened to assist her, lifting her on to the bed as she might have done with a child. She arranged the pillows for the dainty head, so richly crowned with gold. Andre coughed a little while Victorine was engaged tucking in about her feet the silk petticoats and the long white train of her gown. Then she gave a gasping cry which caused the maid to turn toward her with a shriek of horror, for her face and bosom were being rapidly crimsoned with blood that flowed from her mouth.

"A handkerchief, Victorine!" the one she held in her hand was dripping wet with blood.

Victorine thrust her own into her hand, wiping her face with her apron; shaking all the while as she did this so that her teeth chattered. This second attack seemed more fearful than the first one.

"It is the end!" she averred calmly. "Do not leave me, Victorine."

"Yes, I must! I must!" replied the terrified girl as she ran out of the room and across the hall, rapping at Judith's door.

It was about six o'clock in the evening and Judith was preparing to go to the theatre, when she heard that sharp, sudden knock which suggested the impatience of the person who claimed her attention. She stepped hastily to the door, flinging it wide open, to meet the ghastly and horrified countenance of the trembling maid.

"For the love of heaven, what is the matter?"

"Come quick, my mistress is dying!"

Judith flung her hat and gloves into a chair, hurrying after the distressed maid. As soon as her eyes rested upon the fearful spectacle of Andre in her white dress covered with blood, with a quickness of sense natural to her in perilous situations, she commanded the girl to go at once for a physician while she remained with her mistress; then correcting her-

self, "No, Victorine ! You remain with her while I go down to the office." She was out of the room even as she spoke and running down the stairs. The office was full of men, but she did not bestow a thought upon them as she addressed the clerk in an excited voice.

"I want a physician for No. 12 ; is there one in the house?" she inquired.

"There is," responded the clerk, leisurely.

"Oh, hurry him, please ! This is a case demanding immediate attention."

"What is the trouble, Miss Kent?" inquired a voice behind her, and turning her head she beheld the manager.

He stood calmly looking down upon her in his collected way, seeming to inquire more by his manner than with his lips the cause of her agitation. He was so immaculate in nicely calculated order of person, so clear-cut and strong and stony in his self-reliance, that Judith, all fire and nerve, was irritated by the sight of him at that moment. He seemed to her a mere calculating machine, a thing without proper human feeling.

She turned upon him with sharp impetuosity.

"A woman is dying," she said, and turned to leave the room. She heard him following her, although she did not pause to consider the fact that he wished a more definite explanation. If he could be cold and uncivil she could match that humor to-night at least.

"What did it concern him if they all died," she thought bitterly, "if John King's ship sailed safely between the reefs."

At the foot of the stairs he intercepted her by laying a detaining hand upon her arm.

"Miss Kent, will you kindly tell me who is ill?"

She looked down upon him from the first step of the

stairs, her young face full of worry ; her eyes with the pathetic Cenci look in their grey depths.

"It is Andre Dorée," she answered briefly and hurried on.

"May I go in?" he asked as he followed her.

"Ah? there is the doctor now?" and they all entered the room together.

"Good God !" was John King's single exclamation. It caused Andre to unclose her eyes and look up at him. Judith stood near him upon one side of the bed, her hands locked together, her gaze fixed upon the doctor's face, full of inquiring eagerness. Victorine was holding a little bed lamp so that it cast a ghastly yellow shade over the sick girl's features, whose pallor was still farther intensified by the red stain upon her lips and the feverish brilliancy of her blue eyes.

"Will I die?" she inquired faintly of the doctor, who was holding a spoon for her to swallow the colorless liquid he had dropped into it.

"You must be very quiet, and the attack will not prove fatal," he replied in his grave professional voice.

"Not fatal!" she murmured again. Then she looked at John King ; such a look as he never forgot to his dying day. Everything that a despairing soul could express seemed concentrated in the eyes fixed upon his face. It caused him to bend gently down, touching her loose light hair, smoothing it with a woman's sympathetic hand away from her forehead.

"Poor little girlie ! What do you want?" he inquired with so much feeling in his voice, that it touched Judith so deeply that she began to cry.

"Nothing," answered Andre faintly, as she put her hand beneath the pillow.

"You must not do that, you must lay very quiet," commanded the doctor, as he leaned down to draw the coverlet which had been thrown over her closer beneath her chin.

"I want a handkerchief," she explained.

Judith was crying hysterically. There was something fearful expressing itself in Andre's face, which passed into her sympathetic soul, melting it to tears. It seemed to her, that the great angel of doom had descended and set his black seal upon the fair face before them. That already that mysterious and dividing veil hung between them, which separated her from their earthly care and concern. Her face was so hardened, helpless, and hopeless.

"You must not cry like that, you will make yourself ill," persuaded John King, rising from his stooping posture to bestow a little attention upon her.

"I am ashamed!" she responded in a suppressed voice, "but I will be better in a moment."

"It will not be fatal!" again murmured the sick woman, moving her hand restlessly beneath the pillow, still looking at Judith and John King as she withdrew her hand under the coverlet, and placed it over her heart. There was a muffled report of a pistol-shot from the bed. Every person in the room uttered some exclamation of horror as they turned toward it.

"My God, what a nerve!" said the doctor, as he stripped down the coverlet, revealing the smoking revolver clutched in the dying woman's hand. John King seized her quickly in his arms, and as he did so a look of victory, like a flash of light, illumined her eyes, her lips for one instant. Then the pulse fluttered out in the wrist, beneath the doctor's fingers. The golden lashes fell upon the woe white cheeks. The jaw dropped slightly apart and the doctor, rising slowly from the side of the bed, pronounced in an awe struck voice, "We can do no more; this woman is dead."

As John King sat with the dead form clasped in his arms, it seemed to him that he could not allow all that represented life in her to go out into unreckoned

space. His mind was full of the most profound impression and inexpressible thought, which seemed to take account of his complicity in this tragedy. He saw the doctor standing with his watch in his hand upon the opposite side of the bed, he heard Victorine raving and screaming in an adjoining room, he saw Judith Kent with her hands pressed against her ears, sitting crouched upon the floor, with her face bent down upon her knees and concealed. A gray mist appeared to veil all, and to render the scene secondary to that which rested its broken heart and blood-stained lips upon his bosom. Death in its most pleasant aspects was a terrible thing to him, but to confront this sudden thrusting out of existence by an uncalculated act of madness, this blackness of human destiny, so rashly hurried against the blank walls of an unknown future,—and the cause of it all. Ah, there was the bitterness of death in this thought, like the seven wounds of "Our Lady of Sorrow," piercing his aroused conscience, as he felt for the moment that he had played his miserable part in the cause which sent this unrepentant and misguided soul hellward. There can be nothing so reproachful as a dead face. It accuses by the very majesty of its impressive silence, its inability to accuse or demand justice. The thought possesses one that it is all over and he can never atone to it for injuries done. He seemed to see her at that moment, when his better nature was aroused, like a plant fallen from heaven, and ere it came to flower crushed and trodden under a brutal hoof.

"She is dead, Mr. King," said the doctor for the second time, as he turned away. Still for another moment he did not move; fixed, rooted to the spot by the thought of the tender beat of life which can be so quickly stilled forever. He thought of Eileen, and a tremor shook his strong frame. Of Alice,

whom he had accused and made responsible. He saw as in a dream, the lilies on her breast and in her dark hair. Thus she would go out one day unforgiven, and the great and solemn peal of the organ, the mellow voice of the singer, would announce that she slept—and he—where would he be in that hour? In Heaven or Hell? The tender pathetic refrain of her voice floated through the dark chambers of his memory: "We have erred and strayed from thy ways."

As again he saw in vision the black robed figure of the kneeling woman making her passionate confessions to Heaven, he rose suddenly from the couch to press his cold white hands against his head. He heard Judith sobbing at his feet, and wished that he could weep so, but he was too strong to express his torture that way. He longed so much for the touch of something warm and human near to him; he stooped down, raising the girl almost fiercely from the floor.

"Come away!" he commanded. "I must see what can be done here. It is no place for you, Judith."

In her weakness and terror she clung to him. It soothed him to comfort her a little; it gave him some cause for speech, that served to withdraw his mind, in consideration of her, from its inward conflict. He led her out across the hall, through a crowd of horrified people who stood about the door talking incoherently with the doctor.

"Come in," she sobbed as they reached her door together. "Come in and let me speak to you, I am so miserable!" Still she clung to him with her cold trembling fingers, she looked at him with her piteous tear drowned eyes; her pathetic Cenci eyes, clinging to his set, white face. "We have both sinned against that which lays in there beyond the power of forgiveness; oh let us repent together!" Her sweet voice

was broken by her sobs ; her tears fell over her sorrowful face like rain.

"You can never know," she said, "how I ache here !" with which she placed her hand against her heart. "Because I have been so cruel ! so cruel to her !"

"You accuse yourself too much," he answered coldly, as he came in and closed the door, leaning against it, with all his agony inside.

"Oh, it is so horrible !" she raved, wringing her hands. "That any one should suffer like that ; and that we should forget to be human, that we should reckon ourselves so much better flesh !" still he stood with that stern, white look making his features rigid.

"You are very emotional," he declared. "And you will make yourself sick to no purpose." You had better lie down."

"I want something to ease my conscience !" she burst forth more passionately, covering her face and bowing down as she wept, until her whole body shook.

"I feel as though I had murdered her ; murdered Andre Dorée, poor little Dorée !" Here she threw herself face downward upon the couch. "You may go and leave me alone," she said with that sudden perversity of strongly aroused emotions.

Instead he followed, kneeling at her side, he lay his arm across her back and bent his cheek to the pillow.

"It is I who have need of comfort, little one ! I am a very wretched man, Judith !" he confessed. "You have committed no real wrong in your innocent young life, but I, Judith—this circumstance is like a stern-light in a ship, it serves to show the path I have traveled, the reefs I have struck, and the disasters I have sustained. The worst of it is, we can never go back, Judith, to redeem ourselves."

"But we can go on, and that is why I want you ; to

see and to help by your wrongs to see my own faults and weaknesses. Yesterday I thought I was a good girl ; to-day I think I shall never be clean to my own conscience because I have—I have—been so cruel—I have ——” She could not speak, but in her passionate longing for sympathy in her suffering, she threw her slim, white arm across his neck, as she pressed her tear wet cheek deeper into the pillow.

“I thought I was so much better than she, than you, and I am only a sinner in another way. I want to atone, to do something—let me help you—let me be good to you !”

She felt an arm thrown suddenly about her waist like a bar of iron. It dragged her unresisting form nearer to him.

“The bed of death brings each of us to our individuality,” he said. “You shall be good to me, little one, if you will and God bless you !”

One instant she felt the strong, firm lips pressed against hers, and the next moment he had left her, not daring to linger longer.

Those wounds heal ill that men do give themselves, and John King felt as he closed the door of Judith Kent's apartment that the lance was in rest for another sharp tilt with his own soul. Whatever was poetic and strong and true in his nature had been so overwhelmed by a practical consideration of his material interests and social appearance among worldly minded men, that virtue was introduced into a disadvantageous competition with self-interest. The deep and tragic events of the hour had brought him the alarming recognition of what lay concealed under the dry crust of a selfish animalism ; and there he beheld the uplifting and outreaching of a tender human soul, passion driven, and conscience guarded and accused. As he walked with a slow, meditative step across the hall in the direction of Savelli's door,

his mind was made the ground of contention between the pull of two opposite claims ; his heart and his intellect. The beat of life in his bosom rose sharply in response to the memory of a pair of warm, confiding lips pressed against his own. His body thrilled with the remembrance of a slim white arm about his neck, while his ears were filled with the ring of her humble petition to be good to him—it pierced his consciousness like a sword. Once more into his life came the tender dream of linking itself to some white womanhood, which thus allied might become the guardian impulse to all that was noblest in his soul. Such is the magic of loving, it may engender in base souls, even, holy emotions and lofty desires. But with John King these thoughts were coupled with some twinges of remorse. He was finely attuned in his inner being, it is true, to the touch of what was noble, but the wrong keys were continually being played upon by the fingers of the devil. He made the opportunity and fate produced the discord.

With mixed thoughts and emotions he arrived at Savelli's door, where he softly rapped upon it. He could hear the young tragedian repeating his lines as he paced the floor. Pietro opened the door. Savelli, who had not heard the confusion without, smiled upon King in a genial way, as he signified by a nod of his head his wish that the manager should enter the room.

"King," he laughed, taking a square look into his visitor's face, "how melodramatic you look this evening ! I expected you would be at the theatre. What time is it, Pietro ?"

"Savelli," John King hesitated, with such an expression of distress pictured on his grave countenance, the fiery and impulsive Italian cried out in alarm : "For God's sake, King, don't look at me in that way. What has happened ?"

"A woman has shot herself, Savelli."

"A woman shot herself? Where? Who is it?"

"In this hotel. It is Andre Dorée."

Instantly every drop of blood left Savelli's cheek, as he grasped the back of a chair to steady himself.

"Shot herself! You say shot herself this evening, King? Was she mad quite, do you think?"

"God only knows who reads the human heart," replied King solemnly.

"Can I go in, King?"

King shook his head. "The coroners must see the body first, Alessandro."

"Why was I not called, King? This is a terrible thing to happen."

"It is so terrible, Alessandro, that you need to be thankful you did not see it."

Mechanically Alessandro raised his eyes to the clock. "It is time to go," he said, "Pietro, my hat and coat. It seems inhuman, though. We must go to the theatre and say our part before the world, as though sorrow and death had no place in the life of a successful manager and brilliant star. These are the tragedies behind the scenes which serve to quicken our sensibilities and deepen our impressions as actors and men."

"Poor little woman! I cannot even yet realize that what you tell me is true! Give me a glass of wine, Pietro."

Upon drinking the wine he turned with a quick, impulsive movement toward John King, putting out his hand in a gesture of command. "This will make a place for Florence, King."

"Florence!" was John King's single exclamation as he gave Savelli one of his sharp, sidelong glances, twisting the end of his moustache as he spoke.

CHAPTER IX.

WE need not linger over the mournful details of the last chapter. When a woman has shot herself to death, her life and the cause are chiefly considered, her burial is a matter of secondary importance. We go under the cover of darkness, and after the first shock of our departure we are soon forgotten. This was no less true with poor little Dorée and the Savelli company than with the rest of humanity. With Judith, as with all natures capable of being so intensely wrought upon, the passage of the storm marked a period of calm in which she contemplated herself with less satisfaction than she could have wished. She saw that at a time of great excitement she had granted more liberty to the manager than in a mood of cooler contemplation her reason would sanction as being wise. She felt herself rebuked by the childish letting down of her impulses so far as to have put her arm around his neck, and to have allowed the manager to have kissed her. With Savelli, on a similar occasion, it had been a simple act of affection which it comforted her to remember ; but with John King, he had responded to her thoughtless caress with something in the act that made her face burn with uncomfortable confusion every time she thought about it.

The act of throwing herself into Savelli's arms or of kissing John King, was not so coquettish as one would imagine, if the life of the actress was to be judged of by that of an ordinary woman. In a profession where the most exquisite sensibilities are required, and the emotions are so continually wrought upon and demanded to appear upon the surface,

this abnormal condition of life and character, when taken in connection with the free association of the sex upon the stage and in the dressing-room, has a tendency to break down those natural barriers of reserve which society elsewhere establishes between men and women. It is true that such associations are often very innocent and charming in their unreserved familiarity, if the woman is wise and the man is honorable; but so much in such character and behavior amidst scenes alluring to the senses, is thrown open to the admission of all sorts of objectional relations, that they are more frequently damnable than pure.

It is singular that the two conditions of life, the moral and the immoral, meet here upon a common plane without mingling, and yet without much open rupture, such as public scandal. Nowhere else have a man and woman such liberty, if they choose, and are so little censured and talked about as upon the stage. There is one other circumstance which goes far to establish so much freedom between the sexes in this profession. It is to be found in the feeling of each one that he is in a sense separated by his profession from the rest of mankind, and therefore more closely linked together, like persons of one family. They realize that they are a picturesque and romantic people, whose joys and sorrows are not of the order of the common multitude. They feel themselves, in accordance with this idea, in a sense unrestricted and irresponsible to society in general, in which they are as little concerned as it might be with some strong religious sect or fanatical brotherhood.

So Judith's acts must not be measured by that strict sense of decorum which should mark a woman's position in any other situation in life. However, Judith was a good girl, who looked rather to the hope of ennobling the profession she had chosen by the correctness of her morals and the loftiness of her aims,

rather than to contribute to its immoral effects by the looseness of her variable impulses.

In accordance with this idea, and in consideration of some hints and innuendos regarding the manager's character, enforced by her own impression of it, she found herself, as I have before stated, not a little perplexed by the situation. As she began to take cool counsel of her reason, she considered that the warm and generous impulse which impelled her to lean down to shape and to raise the inflexible spirit of John King by the strength of her weak, white womanhood, was a doubtful task. She considered it unfortunate that he should look her way with any particular interest; as there was something in herself which responded to the strong determination in him to win whatever his heart was set upon. In short, Judith could not quite calculate her pace; already she felt pulled by the dangerous magnetism of the man to the edge of the maelstrom, in which all her hopes as a woman might perish. Aware, so well aware, that, despite her doubts, she had so much womanly sympathy and longing to be good to him, she thought it wise to put a barrier between them. She concluded her cogitations upon the subject by offering the half distracted Victorine a place with her as a maid; which that young woman was only too glad to accept. That poor Victorine's grief was sincere was amply testified to by the frequent bursts of hysterical weeping in which she indulged during the following week of Andre's death and burial.

Judith was very kind to the poor girl, treating her much more like a friend than a servant; she administered very freely to her both good counsel and medicine calculated to quiet the nerves and compose the mind. As soon as the opportunity presented itself she managed very demurely to inform

John King that she had taken Victorine as maid, and would not now again ever be quite alone.

"One gets so morbid, I find, when there is no one near to lavish a little sympathy and affection upon, or to relieve one's self of a certain amount of foolish talk likely to get damned up in a woman's head and to find vent at inconvenient moments by the way of her careless tongue."

John King did not appear to quite relish this bit of information.

"Judith, look at me, please." They were sitting at breakfast together, the width of a small table between them. In his eagerness, he rested his arm upon it, leaning half way across. Blushing furiously, Judith managed to raise her eyes to his, meeting a look of stern rebuke.

"You do not wish to be kind to me, little woman? You have repented the generous impulse of the other day?" Something in his grave, quiet voice seemed to penetrate her blood and to beat in the flying pulses of her whole body. With one of her unconquerable, childish impulses overcoming the woman's wise dignity, she put out her hand with a quick, nervous movement signifying her inner disturbance.

"Yes!" she confessed, the tears moistening the clear gray disk of her lovely eyes, "I would like to be good to you, Mr. King, but I am half afraid of you."

A smile of triumph worked hard for expression at the corners of his mouth as he drew himself up stiffly before his plate, addressing himself diligently to the meal arranged around it.

"You need not fear me, Judith, how could I harm you? I have no wish in my heart concerning you that is not honest."

On her part she bridled at this speech, which sounded as though he was conciliating a very young

person. She struggled to assume a cold, grave manner, which was wholly unnatural, and succeeded in imposing upon him only so far as he permitted her to eat her breakfast in silence. With a slight frown of annoyance puckering her brows, and her cheeks burning hot with the most bewitching color, she arose from the table without apology.

"Good morning, Mr. King," she said curtly, and so would have left him.

"Judith ! Miss Kent !" he was beside her speaking softly with his face very near to her own. "Please permit me to call upon you this afternoon. I feel that I should like to vindicate myself."

She hesitated without looking at him.

"Will you?"

"Is it of so much importance, Mr. King?"

"Judith, I object to this play on your part, it is too shabby to be real. Let us be true and sincere friends, if nothing more, I implore you. I do want to see you, it is very important to me that I set myself right in your estimation."

"Then you may come at four o'clock," she consented.

"Thank you," he responded, and she hurried away.

It happened that afternoon that Victorine had one of her inconsolable attacks of hysteria, produced by the sight evidently of a little pin which Andre Dorée had given to the maid.

"Oh Madame ! the beautiful little Madame !" she burst forth in a flood of tears. She continued to reiterate these exclamations until Judith felt like screaming, so sharply did the cry jar upon her nerves.

"Will you go into my room, Victorine, and lie down upon the couch? You must try to control yourself a little more. I will bring you some tea directly."

The request had the tone of a command, which led Victorine to obey without questioning. Judith wet a handkerchief in cologne water, laying it across the girl's forehead, who seemed, once she touched the couch, to lay upon it quiet and exhausted. Then she proceeded to get out a pot for making tea, but the process was so prolonged that Victorine had fallen asleep before the cup was ready to present and John King rapped at her door for admittance. As she opened it to him, she remarked that he looked a little worn and jaded, and that his eyes coned her face with an unmistakable expression of anxiety. He laid his hat upon the table, seating himself near to Judith where he could watch every expression of her changeful features.

"Will you have a cup of tea, Mr. King?" She inquired with unaffected hospitality. "I have just made a cup for Victorine, and she has gone to sleep." She was busily engaged in pouring it out while she talked, and when she had finished she came toward him with the translucent china in one hand, and the silver cream pitcher in the other.

"Will you have it? I notice you look tired."

He reached up, touching the tips of her fingers as he took the cup from her hand, in such a way as to cause her to look directly at him, and so, as their eyes met, a certain expression of sympathy made itself manifest between them, that proved so embarrassing to Judith, she quickly averted her face, as she sat down to drink her tea a few feet removed from him.

"I thank you for the tea," he said, still pursuing her with his quizzical, half tender glance, adding immediately, "I would like to know some of the instances leading up to Miss Dorée's suicide, if you happen to know anything more about it than I do. She was

not the sort of a woman I should have expected to have done such a thing."

"Why not?" inquired Judith. "She was just the sort of a woman I should have expected to have done such a thing, a little later certainly."

"That is the point, Miss Kent, a little later, when her beauty was gone, she might have found herself so poor in purse and person, but now when her beauty was valuable—I was a good deal shocked and annoyed—the circumstance was so likely to involve us all in a scandal."

She was astonished at his change of demeanor regarding this affair, to hear him express little sentiments of pity, or apparent recognition of the real causes leading up to the tragic conclusion of an unhappy life. Did it mean nothing more important, that a beautiful young woman had killed herself because of the insupportable misery of life, than the prevention of a scandal, or the preservation of the moral standing of a company?

"I want to know," he went on coolly, although he could not mistake her look of grief and censure, "if you will please tell me how much you know of this affair, and what you told Alessandro Savelli."

"I told Alessandro Savelli nothing," said Judith, slowly, and with deliberate emphasis. "But what I know is, that Andre Dorée held her position in this company by the favors of two men; one posed as a lover, and the other as a speculator."

John King flushed a little under this contemptuous speech.

"You make the statement both broad and bitter, Miss Kent," he responded, half angrily. "It is a part of every manager's business to accept the favors of fortune. The compact between myself and Henri Austin was made squarely upon business principles. The lady was his sweetheart, I was given to under-

stand that they were engaged to be married. Whether they would or would not consummate their engagement, was not my business to inquire. She wanted a position in the company and he was willing to pay well for her public appearance. You have been on the stage three years, Miss Kent, and must have had a practical demonstration ere this, that my position in this affair is by no means exceptional."

"Whether it be exceptional or not, I do not hesitate to express my scorn of a transaction so contemptible." In her agitation she rose, the warm color of indignation mounting to her white forehead; her large, beautiful eyes flashed down upon him the fire of her deeply stirred emotions.

"Few men I have known, I will allow," she went on hurriedly, "are better for being examined closely, but there are those whom I respect too much to believe that they would willingly sacrifice manhood in themselves, so far as to deal in the prostitution of my sex for the love of a dollar."

John King threw back his head and laughed contemptuously.

"Such a man?"

"Such a man, I believe Alessandro Savelli to be!"

"And I, Judith?"

In her girlish impetuosity: "You are his moral opposite," she said.

In great anger, John King rose suddenly from his seat, with a face both white and stern. For a moment they stood thus in silence, regarding each other, their types strongly contrasted; she all impulse, softness, light and emotion, he manly, strong, dark, determined, like a black diamond casting a lustre over an oriental pearl.

"Judith Kent! I will not permit you to insult me because I am a man, with full knowledge of the world, and you are a dreamy, half-developed, imprac-

tical girl. What can you expect, but that you will lose your position and opportunity with me?"

"I expect that I will, Mr. King, but I still have the courage of my convictions," replied Judith, firmly, reseating herself as she spoke, in order that she might conceal the loose tremor of her limbs.

"Miss Kent, I fear you have provoked my temper," he smiled, "I do not wish to be angry with a person so impolitic and charming as yourself, but permit me to advise you, as one older and wiser as to the ways of womankind and mankind, to hold a stronger rein over your impulses and imagination."

He spoke with his usual cold manner and inflexible voice. As Judith watched him narrowly, she saw the lower lip was drawn in sharply against the narrow row of white teeth, expressive of that necessary submission of what was strong in him to the rule of the will, that was not made by the rebellious blood. The face attracted and repelled her at once, by a sort of "dangerous grace and disquieting charm." In this mood the unity of strength and delicacy in his countenance made him as handsome as a tiger.

Having opened her lips upon a matter of so much importance, however, with a woman's wilful perversity, she was determined to carry the question through to its final issue. She felt like a timid pioneer in a strange country, and John King was a mighty obstacle, but she had tenacity and will, if not strength, quite equal to his own. She was the second woman who had looked up to him with an innocent wish to change the color of his morals and through him to create a new moral atmosphere for the stage.

"I am not of an argumentative disposition, Mr. King, but I see a great cause of complaint against the present policy of theatrical management. It ought to be exposed and denounced all over the world; it ought to be labelled infamous, in the interests of the

unfortunate actress, and although I am slow to take up such things, having been roused to action and a sense of my duty by the awful lessons of the hour, you may be sure that I shall follow it as long as I have a tongue in my head, or a breath left in my body."

Judith betrayed her weakness to the critical eye regarding every movement, every shade of expression that flashed over her face, by the nervous quivering of the delicate hands that lay locked together in her lap.

"You have not much of either to spare just yet," he smiled down upon her, with his clear cut intellectual face full of sweetness.

She was so strangely agitated she could not allow him to look at her with the inquiring tenderness of a man who seeks a reason. It was not so much that he had at this moment the power to excite in her sentiments of a kindred nature to that silently expressing itself to her, as that her nervous system was so weakened by the repeated shocks of the past few days, a physical response was manifested to every fresh cause of disturbance.

"Mr. King, will you excuse me from further talk to-day? I may have been rude to you in my statements of some disagreeable facts; but I am not willing to retract." She arose abruptly to conceal her tears, turning her back in silent signification of her wish that he should go away.

"I have, too, been a trifle brusque, I hope you will pardon me, Miss Kent," and we will resume the conversation at another time. He came around before her to offer his hand; she placed her own reluctantly in it, still turning her head so that he could only see the round oval of her cheek and the heavy waves of her hair caressing her white temples. He held her hand

a moment, regarding her with a revival in his face of the tormenting hunger of his heart.

"Miss Kent, will you permit me a little more freedom that I may vindicate myself, or become converted to your orthodox notions of life!" He did not wait for her answer, but, as though fearing it might prove unfavorable to his wish, he pressed her hand warmly in his own ere he dropped it, and hurried from the room.

Straight to Alessandro's door he walked, and rapped peremptorily upon it. Pietro answered the summons.

"Is Alessandro in, Pietro?" he inquired.

"No, sir."

"When will he return?"

"I cannot say, sir, he left no word."

"Tell him when he comes back, that I have telegraphed for Florence Winter."

"Is that all, sir?"

"It is all," replied the manager, as he proceeded to light the cigar he carried in his fingers. He walked thoughtfully down the stairs into the office, sending the telegram as he had promised, to Miss Winter, with instructions that she should meet the company in Chicago a week later, and from this business he hurried on to that of the theatre.

CHAPTER X.

SCARCELY had John King departed, before the bell-boy announced himself and presented Judith with seven letters. Five of them were complimentary, and one was from a mooning swain who proposed elopement, and implored her for her autograph photograph. One praised the turn of her chin and the

length of her eyebrows. Another raved about her expressive lips and eyes. One studied mythology to liken her to all the goddesses, in turn, who had ever blessed or cursed a pagan world. Another letter ended with the most startling lines, intended to express poetic feeling:

“Oh, tragic queen, enveloping my thought,
Till all my burning brains with madness fraught,
If of my own thy own would be a part,
I'd bless the cursed shaft that hit my heart.”

In great disgust, Judith threw this letter into the fire. “The men are all fools!” she declared, with one of her sweeping assertions; “and the women are such vain simpletons, which makes the idiocy of the human race complete.”

The sixth letter atoned for the other five, it being an intelligent and readable thing; commending her powers as an actress, and ending with a delicately worded compliment to the woman. The writer declared it would give him “the greatest delight to meet the young actress and to introduce her to his family, consisting of his mother and two sisters, who did not presume so far as he had done in expressing their admiration of her.”

“Well, that man is one of the worthy few, I suppose, for whom we live and strive; and here is the last, which is from my dear madame,” with which she picked up madame's letter, hurriedly cutting the envelope. “Madame does write such a clear, strong hand, a type of her clear, strong soul,” with which she spread out the pages upon her knee. They ran in madame's usual erratic fashion as follows:

“MY DEAR GIRL: Excuse the ugly correction, I was about to write Girl with a small “g,” just as though I had not been taught that capitals were pre-

ferred in all forms of address, like the headings of letters, etc., but immediately aberrated—I do not feel quite sure of my authority in the use of this word, but I choose to use it and maintain my rights to coin my own words. If I can make them more expressive than Webster and all other legal authority, it is a sure guarantee of my unusual versatility and intelligence in these matters, as it would be if I had rivaled Worth in creating a new gown. I want to tell you, my dear, that I have passed through a most trying ordeal, and have barely escaped with my life. Out here in this beastly country, that seems like the backbone of the world, as its main features are bumps and hollows disposed in the most regular order that could be calculated upon to break the necks of the whole human race; out here, I say, in the nastiest season of the nastiest year, the manager had the boldness to propose a ride, and I, the temerity to accept it.

“Why did I go, dear? Well, I will tell you that I had a visit from Florence Winter yesterday, with a promise of the affliction being repeated to-day. Of the two evils, I inclined to the old aphorism so far as to prefer the least—that is, to having all the fat on me converted into butter by being pounced over the backbone of the world behind an old beast of a horse and a malicious manager, who rather enjoyed the prospect of bringing me back transformed, or deformed, to a second infliction of Florence Winter.

“Who is Florence Winter? Well, I am mighty glad you do not know; I hope you never will, except by the medium of my pen.

“To commence with, my dear, she is a pretty little thing, but that is the first ground of offence to be preferred against her by a fat old lady like myself.”

“How madame does love to abuse herself,” protested Judith. “She is neither old nor fat.”

"But, Judith dear, I must lay claim to some intelligence. I at least know how to act, and Florence is incapable of acting, only in one way ; that is, stupid.

"She is so round, so pink and white, so dainty, so small in body and soul, one loses all patience with her. She is so small, that she can get into all sorts of places where she has no business to be, but then she is a cunning, managing little creature, that one can't get rid of without killing her. She lives by such a few principles, that those few principles are her whole entity, and as one objects to those few principles from first to last, one does not know exactly what to do to escape her. She clings like lichen ; is sly as a mouse, and as innocent and soft as a kitten in the corner. She seems so out of the way by her incapacity to understand, and yet by that very capacity to not understand or to misunderstand, she is always bothersome and intrusive. You would always like to hit one of her delicate shams, but being aware that every other sham is dependent upon the one you most despise, you know that an honest knock in the right direction would be a general exposition of all her frauds, and she would go to pieces like a house of cards.

"Let me illustrate this scandalous information concerning one of my sex. I feel this letter is a purely feminine decoction, because it is a scratch on the back of a woman by another woman's hand. We are such nasty, spiteful creatures to each other ; but in this case I shall unburden my mind, get relieved of my spleen, and make a good attempt to justify my statements. There are people who are born to be talked about, because they can never be talked at or to.

"Florence is such a person.

"The first season Savelli came to this country, I had

the honor to be one of the company ; that handsome boy, Bell, was with us, and a great favorite of the young star. Into this company came Florence Winter one day, to intrigue and to spoil everything between them. Bell was so big and generous, Florence Winter found ample surface for her shots, I suppose ; however she managed to undermine Bell, I cannot tell, of course, unless it was that Savelli was like some tremendous beast incapable of judging the character of the small things under his feet,—yes, that was it,—he was like an elephant with a mouse in his manger ; the mouse crawled up his trunk, and fuss, and storm, and swear as he would, in elephant fury, the little mouse stuck and nipped and exasperated the big beast, until John King assumed the management of the company. He saw at once that the elephant had a diseased trunk. Somehow, without alarming it, he caught hold of Miss Mousey by the tail. She squealed and squirmed, and the elephant roared tremendously, so that the whole company was petrified with horror by the quarrel. But John King is a very wonderful man as manager ; he has a cool, clear head, a strong will and a steady hand. He pulled Miss Mousey out and sent her out of the company. It cost the manager something, namely, myself and Bell were demanded as sort of a propitiatory sacrifice.

“Nevertheless, John King, undertaking to be showman for an elephant, preferred that he should not be wandering around with a mouse wriggling inside his trunk.

“Why do I say such things ? well, if you knew Florence Winter, you would want to coin new words into the English language to express something I can only express by SMALL SHAM.

“Oh, about my ride. Well I went, I saw, but I did not conquer ; there was nothing the manager showed

me worth conquering, except spily trees, and a ridge of rock. As I have no taste for quarrying and am not a farmer or pioneer, I said 'for God's sake, sir, take me back to the City, as the bristling barbarism of the earth reconciles me to look once more upon the faces of my kind, however ugly they may be.' 'I thought you might enjoy seeing the country, Madame De Sequeria,' he said, as if he was reproaching me for having committed the unpardonable sin. 'The country,' I replied meekly, 'is all right, no doubt, but the aspect is so unfavorable at this particular season and in this particular region, I find it extremely depressing to my esthetic spirit,' adding, 'would you mind hurrying to town? I have an engagement with a friend.' I had revised my conclusion so far as to now consider Florence Winter the least of two evils, and intended to apologize to myself for lack of proper descretion, by taking her to dinner, in case we should arrive, naming the cause of my gratitude.

"My engagement closes here next week, when I hope to have the pleasure of meeting you in Chicago. Already I have written so much, I will then tell you about my dinner with Miss Winter, and until then, I am

"Your loving

"OLIVA DE SEQUERIA."

CHAPTER XI.

WHILE Judith was engaged with her correspondence, John King entered the box office of the theatre, where he found Savelli about to leave it.

"Can you give me a few moments of your time, Alessandro?" he inquired, "I just called at your door to inform you that I had telegraphed for Miss Winter." Although it had been at Savelli's own sugges-

tion he had done this, perhaps the manager was too well acquainted with the young actor's impulsive temper not to understand that the news would be far from pleasing to him. Alessandro turned upon King a sharp look of frowning annoyance.

"You do not look well pleased, Alessandro! Most delightful and inconsistent of men! come here, if you will, and let us smoke it out together." With which King offered his cigar case, and they both sat down, King, very nonchalantly elevating his feet to a table, and holding the smoking cigar between his fingers, as he purposely avoided the wrathful glance fixed upon him. He sat thus, with his eyes resting upon the red end of the dainty roll of tobacco as if in the smoking coal was contained the most profound problems of his life.

"Why this hurry, King?" inquired Alessandro in a soft, suppressed voice, that was more ominous than the rolling thunder of the deepest base. It suggested to the listener, who knew him well, the calm before the tempest.

"I supposed of course it was a thing you desired; you asked me yourself the other night if she could not come back," whereupon King placed his cigar between his lips, drawing long puffs, and his face and head were completely enveloped in smoke.

"But why did you not come to me before you sent for her? Why in thunder, King, did you not come to me?" inquired Alessandro, wrathfully, his voice and frown deepening as he spoke.

"Why, my dear Alessandro," commenced King, pinching the corners of his mouth to keep back an amused smile, "when a man expresses a wish, I do not think it is necessary that he should repeat himself in order to be properly understood."

To tell the truth, Alessandro Savelli did not know why he wanted or did not want Florence Winter.

Absorbed so completely as he was in his art, he did not bestow much attention to, or have any particular understanding of the lives of women. To him they were as so many ugly or delightful figures moving through his dream. Of course a man of his dignified character and so wholly indifferent to the sex, was the mark for many arrows, that had always rebounded to the injury of the delicate archer, until Florence Winter, by the very force of ignorance, intruded herself into his confidence. She at first succeeded in engaging his eye, and then by her boldness she managed to fix his noble attention upon her helplessness and inefficiency. Perhaps, in a vague way, he stooped to consider her availability to other men less honorable than himself. His nature was as chivalrous as a fifteenth century knight's, and whenever he discovered that a woman was being misused by one of his sex he flew to her defense, and like an enraged tiger stretched out his broad, strong arm as a shield. It happened often that a woman more worthy than Florence Winter went to the wall beneath the actor's eye without his discovering the cause of her misfortune, as in the case of Andre Dorée. He was by nature so abstracted from such scenes, as to be unacquainted with the signs by which such an intrigue could be recognized. He had said to John King on the sealing of their partnership: "Remember, King, that I will never have one of those damned affairs in the company." But as Savelli never peaked or pryed into the manager's business, the "damned affairs" could be very easily managed without his knowledge.

He commenced by defending Florence Winter, because she was weak and pretty, from the possible chance of ruin, and to teach her some of the things she did not know, when he found that that comprised about everything he knew in the line of acting, therefore he taught her everything that she knew in the

profession. This sort of a guardianship bred utter dependence upon her part, and a sense of responsibility upon his. She exasperated and belittled him quite as much as he strove to educate and enoble her. She wrought upon his nervous, impressionable nature to such an extent, that he was often quite beside himself with fury, without really recognizing the cause of the trouble. To-day he was unjust with her in his impatience. She wept or smiled, or moved like an automaton at his bequest, so that to-morrow he was unjust to himself in his effort to support her against public ridicule and his own excitable temper. John King having seen the position of affairs between them at the outset of their career, had calculated upon Miss Winter's demoralizing effects upon the actor as a man and an artist. Accordingly he found a way to dislodge the enemy of Alessandro's peace, and to send the pretty little monkey about her business in another direction. Notwithstanding this, he knew that she made frequent appeals to Alessandro's purse, which was always freely open to her, and that she attempted to excite his sympathy by piteous little rehearsals in ink of the woes that she endured. Hence, Alessandro's impulsive request that she should be sent for to fill Dorée's place, John King knew was likely to be regretted on later consideration; but King was beginning to feel a deep stirring in his strong nature, like the delicate trills and runs in the prelude to a mighty theme, the intoxicating music of a new love, whose measure must not be broken in his hungry heart by the cool and more careless touch of Alessandro's fingers.

CHAPTER XII.

THE company on closing its San Francisco engagement, made a quick move to Chicago, where they arrived on the tenth of April. The manager was so busy, that he had scarcely any opportunity for extended conversation with Judith Kent. He satisfied himself that the friendship between Savelli and Judith made no progress toward intimacy, and so rested upon his spurs, or, more correctly, he fell to dreaming of her, as he had done but once before in his life, taking the sweet of it with the dainty sips of a connoisseur in the art of loving well. He enjoyed all the aspects along the route to a destination which he hoped would bring his world-weary soul all the delights that the journey promised. He managed his time so as to be quite frequently present at rehearsals, where not a look, a word, that passed between the lovely young woman and the handsome star but was the subject of his critical attention. He did not once impose himself between them as a check to their free intercourse. Upon the evening before their arrival in Chicago, John King became by the merest accident a spectator to one of those charming little upsets by which Satan loves at times to checkmate and torment his votaries.

It happened that he wished to speak to Alessandro between the acts and hurried to his dressing-room for this purpose, before the actor should be recalled. The production given was the romantic play of "The Lady of Lyons." It had reached the pathetic scene of the Lady's humiliation, and Claude's repentance. Judith had been doing some magnificent work, that had brought her most enthusiastic recognition from the house.

The girl seemed inspired ; it looked almost as if she was destined to step before the star in public favor, which could not, from a business point of view, be countenanced at this stage of the game. He well knew that Savelli could not endure this sort of thing, even though the victor was a lady and his beloved friend. He was far too ambitious a man to play second parts to my lady Judith before the world.

John King was well pleased at this turn of affairs, that was likely, more than anything else which could happen, to bring about a rupture of friendship.

Impatient to see the effect of the performance upon the star before he should be called forth in the next scene, he hastened to Savelli's room. He found Pietro alone, fumbling over dresses, and inundated by make-up and wigs, with which he had littered the floor in order to produce the right article for his young master's present use.

"Where is Savelli, Pietro?" inquired John King, in abrupt haste.

"I don't know," replied Pietro, looking up from his task of assorting and arranging: "He has just stepped out a moment."

John King crossed the stage with the intention of offering Judith his earnest congratulations, when through the open door of the dressing-room he beheld that young lady in the arms of Alessandro. Her face raised for his caress was full of the bewitching beauty of youth, and was stamped with an expression of adoration ; her eyes, like great lamps illuminating its white intensity, burned with the passionate fires of her heart. Like a man who comes in a spirit of elation to visit a friend, and receives from him an unexpected blow in the face, John King turned about, muttering savagely as he left the stage, "I might have known it. There is only Hell in this thing for me."

The old strong, passionate King blood was on fire ; he did not seek to restrain its mad work in his brain. Tortured by his disappointment in the woman he was beginning to believe in and to love so passionately, he walked straight out of the theatre, after stopping at the box office for the receipts of the house, and so on to the hotel. He looked like a man of ice, with his strong, clear cut features as hard as a stone, until he reached the privacy of his own room, when he cast his hat upon the sofa, threw off his overcoat, and thrusting a cigar between his lips, with his hands pushed into his pockets, he strode across the room, where he stood by a window looking drearily out into the drizzly night. The electric lights flashed over the hurrying forms passing on the walks below, and the constant coming and going at the hotel was flanked by a line of carriages in waiting at the door. As he stood thus, he reflected bitterly upon the fate of some men to be so much loved. Why was it, he wondered, that the divine nectar of the god, that the sacred fire filched from heaven, only served to scorch his heart without exciting a kindred flame. Where had he missed the charm of charming ? He was no longer an awkward boy. He now walked to the mirror to survey the flattering reflection John King presented to himself ; the form he looked upon was robust and manly in its proportions, and most becomingly and elegantly clad. The face was frowning and pale at present, but the strong forehead, the clear, penetrating eyes, the well-set nose, the line of healthy color marking the clean shaven cheeks, the square chin slightly cleft in the centre, the firm, clear cut mouth well filled with short, white teeth—certainly less favored men were more fortunate than he. Twigging the end of his mustache savagely, he wheeled sharply about, commencing again to pace the floor. As he did so, a large, square envelope

caught his eye, that was lying upon the table. With some suspicion of its contents, as such missives came quite frequently to both him and Savelli, he picked it up, running a paper cutter through the thin edge of the envelope. He withdrew a photograph of a very pretty girl folded inside a sheet of closely written paper.

He scarcely ever took the trouble to read these things, which bubbled up from the scum of the profession ; but being in a frame of mind so tormenting, he was glad of any momentary occasion for diversion. So he moved nearer to the electric globe in the centre of the room, and standing beneath it with the letter raised in his right hand, the other still in his pocket, and his cigar between his lips, he deliberately and slowly made himself the master of its contents.

“DEAR MR. KING :

“Is it possible that you can do anything for me ? I am very unfortunate, this particular season, being out of work. The last manager skipped with all the salary of the company, I have nothing saved, my salary not being as much as I should have received, and I am in a dreadful straight. I really do not know what I shall do, I have pawned my wardrobe to the last garment, and my shoes are so thin that I have to wear paper soles to keep my feet from the ground.

“For God’s sake, if you cannot do anything for me, send me a little money.”

“Drink or opium,” was King’s dry and caustic comment, as he laid down the letter to take up the photograph.

“But she is only a girl, a foolish girl of seventeen or thereabouts.” He stood for a few moments considering the case, as he studied the photograph in his hand. For some reason, he was more deeply moved

by this circumstance than it was his custom to feel when presented with such petitions from the unhappy waifs of the profession. Generally he felt these things as the basest kind of imposture. But something in the pitiful freshness of the girlish face touched him deeply to-night. Finally, he concluded to send her a letter and a little assistance. In accordance with this conclusion, he seated himself at the writing desk, made happy for a few moments with something pleasanter than his reflections upon Judith Kent and Savelli, and scribbled the following lines :

“MY DEAR MISS B—— :

“I am deeply moved by the pathetic tale of your unfortunate condition. As an actress we do not know you, but as a woman, we are so truly sorry we enclose a check for fifty dollars, that can be drawn at any bank in the city. It is all we can possibly do for you, and it will be entirely useless for you to make any further appeal.

“Yours respectfully,
“JOHN KING.”

Enclosing and addressing the letter with his usual despatch, he called the bell-boy, and sent it at once upon its way, ordering at the same time a bottle of wine.

The next morning was a busy one of preparation for departure en route for Chicago. The manager purposely avoided meeting Judith Kent, and to Savelli his manner was cool and crusty. He looked so haggard and pale, however, every one noticed his appearance and not a few commented upon it.

The company had been so hard worked, that a little rest of a few hours seemed to be quite necessary, so that they arrived in Chicago in the evening. During all the time he had not spoken to Judith, and

although he had not placed himself within speaking distance, she could but see that he purposely avoided her.

"I wonder what has crossed this man?" was her mental query. "Is he going to be nasty to me again? I never did see a man who had so many moods and humors."

The next day a dress rehearsal was called for Othello. Judith who was to play the part of Desdemona, was so carried away with the idea of it she could not sleep, but got out of bed in the middle of the night to rehearse her lines, greatly to Victorine's disgust, who occupied a couch in the alcove. With a bed lamp in one hand, she strode up and down the centre of the floor rehearsing in a voice of suppressed tragedy, the last terrible scene.

"Mademoiselle," inquired Victorine in a fault finding tone, "I thought Desdemona died in bed, whereas mademoiselle dies on her feet in the middle of the night."

"Oh, are you awake, Victorine?"

"Mercy! Mademoiselle! how could one sleep? I hear people disturbed and moving in the next room."

"How very childish and stupid of me!" responded Judith, penitently, taking the hint as she set her bed lamp upon the table and got into bed again.

One little understands, unless intimately associated with dramatic work, the indefatigable labor for its success. John King's sentimental reflections were after all the pathetic asides of his busy career. So much, everything in fact, depended upon the management for the financial success of the company. More and more, however, Savelli relieved him of the tedious strain that had attended previously the consideration of inside work. The young actor now assumed the entire charge of rehearsals and stage-settings. The work of this man was continual and phenomenal in

its character. Judith, and in fact all the company, must come up to his standard or they were booked for a sharp rebuke from the beloved lips of Alessandro whom they all worshiped.

Judith scarcely spent an idle minute except when she slept and ate her meals. She rose early, never later than eight o'clock; took her bath and her breakfast, and when not occupied with her studies was accustomed to occupy herself with her correspondence or by entertaining callers. There was always some one seeking admittance between the hours of ten and eleven; or she must visit and dine with Alessandro and John King, in company, perhaps, of another lady of the company, who served to act as a sort of a chaperone to the young woman, so much flattered and sought after at this stage of her career. Everywhere the lionizing of Savelli had to be contributed to by her graceful person, as an individual of secondary importance only to the great tragedian himself; and sometimes, as in San Francisco, it looked as though she was likely to contest the honors of the stage with the star.

According to his agreement, John King met Miss Winter at the station in order to conduct her to the hotel, and from thence to the dress rehearsal before the performance.

On his way out upon this errand he unexpectedly encountered Judith upon the street. He raised his hat in cool civility and was about to pass her with this careless recognition, when she detained him by calling after him, "Please stop, Mr. King—for one moment—just for one moment; that I may be assured you are a real being and not a phantom man!"

He turned impatiently toward her, standing with his hat raised in his aristocratic hand, his manner seeming to be respectful to her rather from force of habit than any real reverence it manifested.

"What did you want of me, Miss Kent?" he inquired curtly. "I must confess that I am in a hurry this morning."

"You are again angry with me, I do not know why, Mr. King, and I would like too. I would rather humble myself to my friends, than they should look at me as though they despised me. I would like to have you tell me what I have done to offend you."

"You are a very childish woman, Judith," he replied with a slight paling of his cheeks that revealed to her, in spite of himself, the beat of some strong emotion in him. His eyes held her imploring gaze without flinching in their steady, critical stare into her sweet, pleading face; while his lips were drawn half scornfully down at the corners. The expression of his face was so unmistakably that of contempt, that a little of the grieved and offended dignity of the woman supplanted the impulse of the child in Judith's variable nature, as with a flushed face and flashing eyes she drew herself up with an air of being offended and bowed herself haughtily before him.

"Excuse me, Mr. King," she said, "I will not detain you this morning or hereafter ever again," with which statement she turned abruptly and left him upon the walk. He stood for some moments looking after her departing figure, the pain of regret softening the scorn of his proud face, but he replaced his hat upon his head saying, "It is well that fury will expend itself in her soft little woman's heart before night. She is too charming and sweet and happy to be cruel to anything excepting herself, one day." He continued to muse as he wended his way slowly to the station: "One day she may be very cruel to herself, if she is not more considerate in her ways."

Judith entering the theatre half an hour later gave a hurried glance at the busy performance already going on upon the stage, among a chattering, joking,

moving company of scene shifters, stage carpenters and property men, all pushing forward their various lines of business to completion. She had no sooner entered her dressing room and given directions to Victorine in regard to the arrangement and order of her gowns, than there came a knock upon the door. Judith was in no mood for interruption, but upon Victorine's opening it, there stood revealed to her astonished gaze the very welcome features of Madame De Sequeria. With a cry of joy she sprang into madame's outstretched arms, "Oh my dear ! dear Olivia !" cried the excitable, impulsive girl, patting her face and holding it between her hand as she threw back her head to view the welcome features of her friend. "How delighted I am, Olivia ! and how sweet in you to come to me at this time when I am so situated as to be in need of your advice and sympathy. To think it is your own dear self, and you never told me when you expected to arrive." This declaration was followed by another expressive squeeze in the girl's warm arms.

"Judith dear, let me take off my bonnet," panted madame after her vigorous shaking. "Perhaps you are not aware, my child, that you are creating a panic in flowers and feathers." Judith unfastened her wraps and laid the bonnet on the table.

"Now I can see you," said madame, "you look as if you had been exceptionally well treated, but I hope you have not run into useless expense, Judith, in order to procure those roses and that becoming plumpness. There are two things in which you cannot cheat yourself without great detriment to all your interests as an actress. That is embonpoint and your board bill. Look at me, Judith, I am an illustrious example of the demoralizing effect of a contented mind and an excellent digestion. Nothing is so conducive to our charm as women as a touch of dys-

pepsia and a real pronounced case of heart complaint. That's right, I thank you for a chair ; oh, have you discovered any new corn radiator ; don't wear French heels, Judith, they have a tendency to squeeze the toes and enlarge the joints. What is the play ?"

"Othello," Judith replies, as she turned to Victorine who had taken her station at the dressing-table indulging in broad, expansive smiles to witness so much genuine affection expressed between two women. Judith realized that the announcement of the half hour would soon be made. "Now, you dearest and best of women !" she exclaimed, "are you to sit here and see me make up, or will you betake yourself to visit Sandro ? He is very nervous, by the way, I met him as I came in, directing the setting of the first scene."

"Well, I think," madame replies, "that every one is upset on such an important occasion as this ; I will not disturb Mr. Savelli just now. Will I be in the way if I watch from this corner your make-up and dressing ? I will promise not to talk, for you must be a trifle nervous yourself."

"There !" Judith exclaims, turning about with a braid of her bright hair twisted about her arm, "I hardly dare confess it, but now you mention the fact, it relieves me to say that I am exceedingly nervous. You know," she continues, breathlessly, "how much more difficult, if possible, is a rehearsal than a performance."

"I know !" madame says. "A performance is a case of 'here goes,' but at a rehearsal you can't get the mechanical impetus."

"That is it !" Judith consents, "mechanical impetus just expresses it. Yes, Olivia, dear, you may sit in that corner, only don't be too critical just now, judge of everything from the front, don't try to make sense out of my spasmodic and generally unfinished

sentences. I think really, dear, that I feel better now after having made my confession, for I shall no longer feel—Victorine, where is that shoe horn?—feel—feel—what was I about to say, Olivia? There! you see how—oh, I know, yes, compelled to restrain myself.”

“No, Judith, dear, don’t restrain yourself, and don’t leave your nose so white,” madame says, in practical and observant fashion.

“Is it too white?” Judith inquired critically, turning her head from side to side to observe the exact shade of her straight, clear cut, little proboscis; holding the rouge in one hand, and a hare’s foot between the thumb and forefinger of the other, she made little graceful dabs at the end of it which gave it the required artistic finish, and brought an exclamation of approval from madame.

“It is such a pleasure to see you make up, Judith, dear; you do it so daintily.

“Do I?” responded Judith. She turned her head over her shoulder, smiling fondly at madame, the teeth glistening like frosted lines of ice between the red carnation of her lips. She then continued the difficult process of dressing, and for some time bestowed her undivided attention upon Victorine, who assisted her.

Things went badly at first, but the manifestations of impatience which Judith exhibited were pacified by Victorine, and excused by madame as the natural consequence of the occasion. Finally, when she had expressed her positive belief that there were no shoes for her feet, stating that Victorine had purposely removed them to some remote corner, they appeared before her very eyes upon the dressing-table, when she properly begged Victorine’s pardon, and the shoes were placed upon the aristocratic feet of a trembling

Desdemona, who then stood up for madame's inspection.

The dress was not the conventional Venetian affair, but a beautiful artistic arrangement of draperies, which had been designed by a well known artist, and was most becoming to the slender figure. Madame moved forward from her corner now, approval written on every line of her features.

"You like it, don't you, Olivia?" Judith asks.

"A dream! a dream! if your performance is up to the artistic effect of your gown, you will be perfection."

"You are such a dear to say nice things to me!" and Judith puts a cold little hand within madame's. "Shall we go out and see what is going on? That scene must be nearly over!"

As they leave the dressing-room together, Judith hears her name called, but in the semi-darkness of the stage is unable to discern anyone; the voice however is Savelli's. "Yes," she answers. Then the voice grows more distinct. "Oh, I see you now," Judith declares. "It was so dark that for a moment you were invisible. Here is Madame De Sequeria, Mr. Savelli, if you can discover her in the gloom of this setting; this is my dear Olivia; or more formally, Madame De Sequeria."

"Oh, I am altogether too pronounced to be put out of sight," she responded, as she offered her hand to Othello.

"Although it is night without stars, we are happy to make you welcome to Venice, my dear madame," responded Savelli, shaking her warmly by the hand, an expression of grave humor lighting his majestic countenance.

"It gives me great pleasure to meet you again, Mr. Savelli, and also to correct your statement. I see two

very brilliant stars so near each other, it suggests conjunction of planets."

Savelli was about to excuse himself, when Judith, with a little hesitancy in her voice, "Will you look at me, Mr. Savelli?" she inquired anxious for his approval or criticism before the opening of the scene.

"Certainly !" he replied, with that large and gentle grace of movement with which he invested the character of Othello, as he put out his hand to conduct her to the centre of the stage.

Madame watches them as they pass before her, such charming figures representing the dreamy grandeur and heroism of the past.

"Divinely matched !" she exclaims enthusiastically, holding her breath on her bosom.

Standing beneath the uncertain glare of the bunch-light, Savelli bent down his great, kingly head with its glorious crown of glistening curls showered about his face and forehead beneath the white turban ; and as she, in all the witchery of her beaming, bright-eyed, red-lipped youth, exquisitely costumed in the rare old silks, raises her sweet eyes imploringly to the smiling tenderness, there seemed to beam upon her from sombre eyes, black with impenetrable shades, the light of his great soul, like the radiance of a new moon in an inky sky.

"You are perfect in the artistic treatment of your gown," he exclaims with mild enthusiasm, raising his hands so that the long line of yellow satin falls back from the tunic sleeves to the high lacings of the Venetian boots one moment, then touches her hair lightly with the tips of his fingers. "Your own beautiful hair, you wear it naturally ; I like it, my fair, my exquisite Desdemona." Once more he takes Judith's cold, trembling hand in his broad palms with that beseeching tenderness, so smiling, so warm, and yet touched with an air of haughty distance that makes

it most alluring to the fancy and affection of the girl upon whom he bestows so much favor.

"You are cold and nervous," he continues, in his rich, bass voice, softly modulated to express such flattering concern.

"Madame De Sequeria! Miss Kent has lost her stage feet; being an older woman at the business, I hope you may restore her somewhat by diverting her mind." With which he bowed and was about to move away to give some final directions to the setting of a piece of scenery, when his eyes rested upon a falling "drop" directly over Judith's head. He snatched her light figure in such sudden and startling haste that Judith utters a cry of amazement; the next moment there is a heavy crash behind them and he has set the girl upon her feet again.

"Did I hurt you, my dear? I had no time to speak."

"I am very grateful," she responds, breathlessly, as she looks behind her with a little thrill of horror at the thought of the narrow escape from a very serious accident.

"My God! you might have been killed!" broke in madame hysterically.

"But we were not, madame," responded Savelli, "and I can restore your protégée to you without even a scratch on her gown."

"Which is so much better than having to appear without legs," commences madame, with irrelevant reference to her own misfortune previously rehearsed to Judith. At this moment John King entered the theatre followed by Florence Winter, whom he conducted to a seat; an instant later, Madame De Sequeria made her way through a stage box to the auditorium. When she saw John King, she smiled, and then observing his companion, a look of cold disapproval froze her features into a dead calm. In fact,

madame looked as though she had just come out of an ice-box with a thunder cloud fixed on her brow.

"Oh, dear Madame De Sequeria!" cried Florence, effusively, stretching out both hands, with eyes so intently fixed upon the gesture as not to observe madame's appearance toward her, "I am so pleasantly surprised."

"Are you?" responded madame, coolly, who knew that Florence's ardor never got any nearer the heart than her own pretty lips and the ears of her listeners. Madame looked down imperiously upon the vain little beauty, so daintily done up in furs and all sorts of becoming gewgaws that would accentuate the sunny ripples and curls of her blonde hair, the dimpled pink of her cheeks, and the sparkle of her blue eyes.

"I am not surprised at anything," said madame, "I am astonished, Miss Winter, that you can wear yourself out with such vulgar emotion; how do you do, Mr. King?" and she put out her gloved hand rather stiffly.

Florence, who always had some "man in tow," was too much engaged with a young reporter to whom she was rehearsing her dramatic conquests and hopes, to be the least impressed by madame's contemptuous behavior.

"I will sit down with her and save his literary fame, for it is quite evident that he has no idea of the professional lies that innocent can tell. If he reports half he hears, he will lose cast among his kind, and his hopes will be blasted in their first feather.

"Miss Winter, if this seat is not engaged at your side I will avail myself of the privilege of a little chat," said Madame, seating herself with a changeful touch of urbanity.

"Mr. King, you are looking exceedingly well for a man nearly forty; how do you like Miss Kent?"

"She has filled the bill," replies John King, who

recognizes that madame is not in the most amiable frame of mind, and makes an excuse to leave the two women, preferring the luxury of a quiet seat in another part of the theatre, where he can watch the appearance of Judith without the interruption of their aimless chatter or petty quarrels.

There seems to be considerable interest manifested by the small audience of critics and newspaper men, as Judith steps down before the grouping composed of the duke and senators. Madame notices this with an emotion of pardonable pride in the appearance of her charming friend. Nods of congratulations sent in the direction of a handsome, distinguished looking man, madame concludes indicate the artist who has designed the gown; and now the pleasant tones of Judith's voice reached the audience. She is putting much meaning into the lines.

"Who in the world is she?" sniffs Florence, superciliously. "I see she got scorched by a Western paper,—literally roasted."

"She is a lady," snaps madame, "*a rara avis* in this profession."

"What poor taste in a gown," goes on Florence, turning up her spiteful little nose. "And I really never saw Savelli half so ugly before."

The reporter on the left commences to scribble, while Florence talks and madame criticises.

"What a pity you are too small for the part, Florence."

King, from the back of the theatre leaned forward with his elbow resting upon the arm of the chair, his fingers twisting the ends of his mustache thoughtfully, his brow knit and his eyes fixed upon the stage. As the curtain falls upon the first act, madame makes her way to Judith's dressing-room, to find her listening attentively to some direction from Savelli; as he leaves

the room, Judith turns to madame and asks anxiously :

"Is it anywhere near the right conception, Olivia, dear?"

"Quite perfect, so far," madame responds. "They," madame refers to the special audience, "are saying nice things about both you and Savelli. You are tired, Judith;" and she adds, "it will be a hard day for you, dear, but just think of your relief and happiness when the performance this evening is over."

"Followed by the misery of reading the criticisms to-morrow," sighs Judith.

"Nonsense! nonsense!" remonstrates madame, as she turns to leave the room. "Do try, dear, and cultivate the habit of thinking better of Judith Kent; there, by by, your most trying scenes have yet to come."

Madame returns once more to her seat beside Florence Winter. The rehearsal drew to a close about five o'clock.

CHAPTER XIII.

At last the season has been brought to a successful close. The future presented the glowing attraction to the young actress of an ocean voyage and delightful sojourn at London, or a few weeks in company with the persons in whom she was most deeply interested. In the midst of hurry of active preparation, she was interrupted one day by a request for a professional interview with a very distinguished New York gentleman; one, whose name, on being announced, was sufficient to set the girl's heart in a flutter of de-

lightful anticipation of the fateful prognostication of such a visit. There could be but one reason for the call—business—and with business in her head, and welcome shining in her lovely, dark eyes, she entered the parlor of the hotel, where she cordially extended her hands to her visitor. He rose, holding his hat behind him as he saluted her by bowing very low over the dimpled fingers that he held for some moments warmly pressed in his own.

"I have but little time to give you, sir," she announced in her own frank, impulsive, impolitic way; when, observing that a slight frown of annoyance contracted the gentleman's brow and that he appeared disconcerted by this remark, she seated herself graciously before him, smiling upon him so innocently, that his confusion appeared to increase with his contemplation of her.

Without allowing her secret eagerness to express itself openly, although her heart gave a great throb of excitement at the question, she managed to reply with a touch of diplomatic composure:

"Possibly, what is it?"

"That you star next season."

At last the dream of every actress's life was to be realized for her. Her work had won its way. It was evident that she had attracted such attention as to be regarded as a profitable speculation on the part of men able to control the means of her advancement. She sat for a few moments with eyelids so drooping as to conceal the flash of triumph which the traitorous color betrayed upon her burning cheek, while she thought, "John King might have done this thing for me, but for his cynical lack of confidence in my power to sustain the rôles."

She remembered, with pardonable pride in her victory, that Savelli, even, had not believed in her as being sufficiently strong and original in her represen-

tative powers to be depended upon for long continued success. He spoke frequently of her "surprisingly brilliant efforts ; of her phenomenal successes ;" as if they were the transitory expressions of artistic fervor, rather than any well grounded methods calculated to create and sustain a style.

"I should certainly reach the height of my ambition if I had the opportunity to appear as a leading light in my profession, but I am," she continued, by the way of explanation, "preparing for an European voyage. We will sail Saturday, and so I have less than a week to get to New York with all my portables in shape."

"That is a great despatch, indeed, for a lady, I should say," responded her visitor, with an uneasy laugh and a shifting glance, that finally sought the toe of his boot, in a momentary gaze of abstract meditation. It was very evident he was deliberating some method of approach regarding the matter with which he was burdened and anxious to deliver himself.

"Do you go alone?" he asked, with hesitation.

"Oh, no indeed ! in London or Paris alone ? I never visited either place before, so that I should be quite at loss to know what to do with myself alone."

"Well, in these days of easy methods of travel, and numerous guides and guide-books, and the acquaintances one makes by the way, with the natural independence of a woman accustomed to such moves as are made in your profession—Oh, have you any engagement abroad ?"

"Not at all. We are off on a little pleasure trip for a few months."

"And next season ? Have you signed any business contracts ?"

"Not at all yet."

"I am very pleased to hear that it is so, as I have a

proposition to make, which I humbly hope that you may consider with favor."

"What are the conditions?" She still managed to speak quietly and to behave toward her visitor with great dignity.

"The conditions mean the expenditure of some fifty thousand dollars, my dear!" He now spoke in the condescending tone of a middle-aged millionaire, "We would form a syndicate to star you. I assure you we think it a profitable venture; you have made yourself a place with the public already that only requires money to supplant many, if not every other, lady stars upon the American stage to-day. You have your future entirely before you, and money shall not be wanting to make it exceptional, Miss Kent."

She raised her lovely eyes to his, full of the shining, happy light of gratitude, to which the visitor responded by a glance that was gracious and benign.

"Am I worthy the venture of fifty thousand dollars? It is quite a sum, is it not? to spend upon a penniless actress—if I should fail to realize the expectations of the company what compensation could be rendered for your loss and disappointment?" she inquired.

Out of the hollowness of his heart and corruption of his worldly nature he entirely misapprehended her modest self depreciation. Leaning slightly forward to lay his plump, white, be diamonded fingers lightly upon her knee, "Does it matter," he said, "when the enterprise is in the interest of so lovely and gifted a young woman, if fifty thousand dollars are lost? Her smiles and favors to anyone of us, would be considered ample compensation for twice that sum of money."

"Sir!" exclaimed Judith, rising haughtily, when she stood looking down in contempt upon her clean shaven, finely groomed, aristocratic visitor.

"How have you dared to come here to me with so infamous a proposition !"

"Is it so unusual?" he interrupted with an attempt to sneer her down.

"I cannot tell," she replied proudly, "such men as you are the best judges of the case, I suppose, but hereafter, I can never remember your honor without recommending you in charity to the mercy of God as a vile old roué, and the contempt of every honest woman. I hope you may never have the audacity to appear in any theatre again where I may play." She turned abruptly from him, leaving the room with an air of an offended empress, while her embarrassed and distinguished visitor, struggling to act the gentleman, but feeling for once that he had played the fool, stood bowing and smiling at her back. She had called him 'an old roué,' a biting truth from the lips of a beautiful girl, which had cost him his vanity, while it impressed upon him the belief that money was not an omnipotent power with *all women*.

Judith upon reaching the privacy of her own room, where Victorine was engaged in putting the last stitches into a becoming house jacket for her mistress, found Madame De Sequeria superintending the completion of the garment, by suggesting the rearrangement of some of the ribbons about the neck and waist. The young girl stopped in the centre of the floor, fixing upon the two women such a frowning stare, that Victorine dropped the garment in amazement, while madame ran hastily toward her, catching her imploringly by both hands.

"Mercy, Judith ! what have you done ? Are you then so offended with your poor Olivia because she assists Victorine to make you charming ? No ! no ! I do not mean to say that, as you would be charming in anything, however ridiculous ; a hoop skirt, a mon-

strous bustle, a cotton rag, and a lace veil tied around you, but you do look so furious."

"It is not you, dear Olivia," replied Judith, relaxing her frown a little, but I have been *insulted!*" she pronounced the word slowly, and with such emphasis that madame gave a scream, dropping suddenly upon an ottoman.

"No! no! Judith, where? when? how did it happen? for Heaven's sake, Victorine, will you lock the door."

"No, Olivia, she need not lock the door. I can take care of myself, I should think."

"And I should think you could not, if you manage to get yourself insulted," declared madame, hysterically. "Insulted, why how ridiculous!"

"Olivia, don't be a fool! there is nothing ridiculous about it at all; it is humiliating." The tears came into her eyes as she spoke, which she sought to conceal by putting her arms around madame's waist and leaning her head against her shoulder.

"Humiliating!" consented madame, "why it is so astounding I could summon courage to shoot a man who dares—Judith you have no bonnet on; why you have managed to get yourself insulted bare-headed; it must be an audacious clerk, or the proprietor of the hotel. You should have called me; I understand their beastly ways so well, and I am no longer a girl of twenty. I have never been insulted since I had bunions. The last insult I ever received was when an insolent old meat-hasher wanted to pay me twenty dollars to appear in his advertisement for patent medicines. It is so funny, I must tell you about it. I used to be quite diplomatic, and when he said twenty dollars, I thought perhaps he might mean twenty hundred, did you say two thousand dollars, sir? It would be a great sacrifice on my part of course, I could not be expected to impair my health by taking

your medicine, but if you could manage to administer the required doses to my photographs without injury to the color of my eyes and hair, I have no doubt it would be of no particular disadvantage to me and a great benefit to you. 'After all,' I soliloquised meekly, 'we are placed here in this world to benefit each other ; I might be persuaded to consider it for two thousand.'

" 'Two thousand dollars!' the creature actually shrieked at me, 'why, madame, I am just starting in business ; I have'nt got two thousand dollars to my name ; besides, I consider it a generous offer.

Judith was now in a better humor, and with smiling sarcasm related to her the incident of the honorable Mister's call.

"Fifty thousand!" mused madame ; "Why, Judith, how impolitic ! It seems to me you might have managed the affair more successfully. Fifty thousand ! why, my dear, you need not have allowed these fool men to have compromised you ; you could have kept the game like a "catch if you can" all in your own hands. It is not necessary, if men will spend money upon a woman, that she needs to prostitute herself ; this is a rare opportunity of your life which may never come to you again, Judith."

"I hope it may not," responded the girl, with imperious scorn, as she rose from the ottoman.

"Well ! well !" mused madame, looking at the girl thoughtfully, "you are a high-spirited little creature, to be sure, and in a moral sense, perhaps you are right. I do not know what I might have done at your age under similar circumstances. I never had the temptation offered ; I never seemed, in my palmiest days, to have gotten much beyond the adoration of the gallery god and the college chaps who used sometimes to shout when I left the theatre : "There goes Olivia ! Hurrah for Olivia !"

"You see, the dear, dead and gone De Sequeria was an immovable obstacle to my early successes, I could not in conscience divorce him, as he never drank, ate opium or ran after other women, and was very good to look at. He was a sort of lay figure, you see, suitable for poses whenever I chose to set him up for public inspection. In private life he was always passive and willing to be supported. There was a baron in the family who transmitted a tremendous amount of good looks and laziness that could never be irradiated from the blood, and which finally from high living and inaction resulted in gout and early death to the entire race. You can well understand I had so much legitimate business on hand in those days I had no opportunity to consider illegitimate propositions, but I really think I should have felt constrained to have acted just as you did this afternoon, if it had been anything less than fifty thousand dollars. However, there is but one practical way to look at the matter. You have spent fifty thousand dollars this morning on a point of honor."

"My conscious purity is of inestimable value to me, Olivia," replied Judith, gravely, to madame's light banter.

"We have to be practical, Judith, you know; fifty thousand dollars means a great many opportunities, and I have known a woman to lose her character and never get a cent for it."

"For shame, Olivia! this is not a bit like you. We will change the subject if you please."

"Nevertheless I must have the last word, like the parrot in the story, and I shall always insist that it was impolitic for a comparatively nameless actress to lose the opportunity of starring, and to send a man who had an honorable tacked to his name, with no open disgrace, and a million or so to his account,—yes,

sending the poor gentleman away with a full pocket and injured feelings, all on a point of honor."

The two women looked at each other humorously for a moment, then burst into a hearty fit of laughter.

The morning of departure dawned gray and chill. Olivia and Judith arrived at the pier early, Olivia declaring that "she preferred being several hours too early rather than one minute too late."

Savelli and King followed, about one hour before sailing. Many friends had gathered to wish the party "Bon Voyage," and together they held a composite reception, during which madame talked to every one, in the meantime keeping her weather eye fixed upon the luggage. The flaming posters with which she had decorated her trunk were a source of great trouble to her, as they were season after season; she never seemed able to put them to their proper use, regardless of the fact that they stated quite plainly in large blue letters, "Not Wanted", or "Stateroom."

In the midst of a tearful farewell with a very dear friend, madame's face suddenly assumed an agonized expression as she recognized her steamer trunk, to which she was sure had been affixed the stateroom poster, suspended in mid-air to be ignominiously dropped to the hold.

What was to be done? Madame rushed forward, her hands outstretched as if desirous of wresting the trunk from the descending arm of the derrick for the purpose of clasping it to her bosom and bearing it away to her stateroom.

"Hi! Hi!" she called to a sailor, "what are they putting my trunk down there for?" The sailor made no reply, and madame shrieked to the man at the helm, or rather at the engine, to desist operations. Her severe attitude carried conviction of a command, and the trunk was swung within reach of a porter.

"This is plainly marked 'stateroom,'" exclaimed madame, striking an attitude and glaring furiously.

"You are mistaken," the porter returned quietly.

"I have a pair of eyes in my head, and am able to read, this end is plainly marked 'stateroom.'"

Further argument is impossible, for the shouts of the engineer accompanied by a volley of mild oaths informs them that they must either remove the trunk or let it go into the hold, as the work of loading was being delayed.

When at madame's bidding the porter has unshackled the precious trunk the ambiguous fact is revealed to her confused mind, that upon the end visible to the porter she had carefully posted, "Not Wanted," and upon the other end the stateroom poster was displayed. The trunk at last finding its destination she returns to her friends to explain that it "was really an interrogation but had been taken as a final answer."

The warning bell rang; the necessary tears were shed; handkerchiefs were waved, but not until they had passed Liberty did Judith turn her eyes from the shore.

The voyage was without other incident than that which usually characterizes all ocean travel.

CHAPTER XIV.

"WE shall sight land, Miss Kent, about eight o'clock to-morrow morning," remarked John King, in a sotto voice aside at dinner. Savelli passed her a glass of wine, and so happened to be looking at them as they spoke, but it was evident he had not caught the im-

port of King's words. "Well," answers Judith apathetically, "we must all go up and promenade the deck, I suppose."

"What is it?" inquired Savelli, critically balancing a morsel of chicken paté upon the end of his fork.

"This mushroom is most excellent," interrupted King, "Vespasian's cooks could not have surpassed it, I am sure."

"Are you authority on that subject, Mr. King?" laughed Judith lightly. "I do not think Vespasian's gourmand appetite ever delighted itself on mushrooms or frog's legs; this *finesse* of modern cookery must have originated in the French school of cooks, I should think."

"The fine art of eating to-day," commented Savelli, who loved the table, "is to run to the most ridiculously small things, by which we can multiply dishes and expense."

"I should say, Savelli," commented John King dryly, who was rather delicate in his choice of viands, "that that paté you have just disposed of was no very small thing." The company smiled at this remark.

"Well, King, you see," continued Savelli complacently, "I have made a fresh discovery regarding the human stomach, which justifies my attempt to treat mine so generously." Everyone looked at the young actor, whose eyes were flashing with amusement, "I was trained to believe that the accommodating capacity of the human stomach was about one pint and a half, but a scientific chap informed me the other day it could be easily expanded to three quarts. I am at present eating on a sliding scale in the hands of the experimenter."

"Where are the cooks who can accommodate him a year hence?" inquired Judith, laughing heartily; "Or

the manager who can foot his bills?" supplemented King.

"Why, Mr. Savelli, you'll bring about a change in modern society."

"In modern menu, you mean, miss," corrected Savelli, gracefully holding up his glass of wine to notice the effect of light upon it.

"History repeats itself. I am studying effects. The good voyage is over; here is to your health and happiness on the other side of the Atlantic, Miss Kent."

John King responding rather eagerly, touched glasses with Savelli as the two gentlemen rose, joined by the little company about them who took up the refrain:

"Here is to the health of the fairest girl that ever crossed the Atlantic!"

With prettily worded and graceful response, Judith touched her lips to the wine, returning the glass to the table.

"Why don't you drink it?" inquired John King, in his low-voiced, critical way.

"I hardly know," she replied, as the company walked away from the table, "unless it is because I have seen the beverage of the gods so often contribute to the humility of my sex. I am superstitious of its influence over myself, perhaps."

"Is it possible?" King stared at her in well bred surprise.

"Oh, no!" she responded, rather thoughtfully, looking beyond him as she spoke. "It is not the beginning of an appetite I fear; but the social letting down of the custom, I abhor. I think tea is much nicer Mr. King, don't you?" She turned with a flash of light in her happy eyes that stirred and electrified King as they rested upon his.

"Well, Judith, I think it depends upon who gives

us the tea ;" he answered her slowly, with that white hunger of passion, she could not fail to observe, coming into his face and giving tremulous modulation to his voice. " Will you give me another cup sometime, Judith quite alone by ourselves ?" He enforced the strong pleading of his face by taking one of her hands as he stood waiting her deliberation.

Alessandro Savelli passed at that moment, a little circumstance which either changed the current of her thoughts or brought them to a point of decision.

" No, I will not !" she replied, decidedly. Alessandro's eyes flashed over the faces of the imploring man and the hesitating girl with a cold expression of disapproval as he passed them.

" Some day, some day you will change your opinion of me, my dear," he insisted firmly.

" I hope not," she replied, with provoking indifference, as she withdrew her hand.

" Why ?"

" Because I would always like to think as well of you as I do to-day." She turned her sweet, merry face back to him over her shoulder as she ran away, leaving him with his feet set squarely together, his head bent forward, his eyes following her reproachfully, and the end of his mustache drawn in between his strong teeth.

Early the next morning, Judith appeared on deck. The sea was in a transport with heaven so far as to reflect all the glory above, its crinkly lines of calm like the uneven surface of a burnished mirror. The Irish coast lay as a dim line of gray drawn across the horizon, there was a crisp brightness and soft color in the atmosphere, as if suddenly struck into moving light by the scintillating radiance of the rising sun, whose round head of yellow sent its long streamers of fire half way up the zenith of cool, slaty blue, over

which rose the feathery whiteness of summer clouds blushing with the rosy consciousness of a new day.

"I think it will rain to-morrow, Miss Kent," said a voice so near to Judith that she started, turning abruptly upon the speaker

"Do you, Mr. King? Then we shall be more than befogged in London, we shall be dribbled."

"Well, a pleasant day must soon follow," responded King, "when we shall appreciate the value of contrasts. Will you take my arm, Miss Kent?"

"Do you settle all the difficulties of your life that way, Mr. King?" she inquired, laying her hand lightly on his arm.

"There is one difficulty of my life I cannot contemplate quite so philosophically."

"And that?"

"Is why you bestow so many favors upon Savelli whose affections are engaged, and so little upon your humble servant, King, who adores you."

"Mr. King! I am too prudish, perhaps, to allow you to talk to me in this flippant manner," she responded stiffly, her heart sinking sorely in her bosom at the recollection of Florence Winter, whom this remark recalled to memory. Strange, but she always now experienced this same sore, sick sensation every time the vain little beauty connected herself in her thoughts with the young actor. She would like very much to have had the matter settled in her mind regarding what John King knew of their relation, but shrank from making her interest in Savelli so manifest to him. With an air of severity and coldness wholly at variance with the tender excitement in her bosom, she maintained a rebuking silence, keeping her eyes, in the meantime, steadily turned away from the sharp, inquiring glance of the manager. Looking at her steadily, John King did not fail to detect

the shadow upon her face, and the sensitive droop at the corner of her expressive lips.

"God knows, I am not flippant about it, Judith! I am very much in earnest." She did not reply only by turning her face further away from him so that the delicate oval of her cheek was all that was visible, except the strained curve of the round throat, as white and polished as a piece of satin, supporting not the dainty head alone, but revealing the finished rim of the pink ear involuntarily attentive.

"Miss Kent, I would not like to see you made miserable, even though I were not happy. I must confess, if you will pardon me and understand me, Judith, that inadvertently I witnessed the dressing-room scene—"

She turned upon him almost fiercely, her face in a blaze of anger.

"What do you mean? What are you hinting at? I do not understand." As he felt her about to withdraw her hand from his arm, he quickly covered it, holding it decidedly in his own.

"You are angry with me," he continued in a aggrieved tone.

"I would like to know what you mean? and why you talk to me occasionally as though I were a child?" She was looking him bravely in the face which was what he desired, but he could feel her hand trembling upon his arm.

"Why, I saw you in your dressing-room with Savelli one evening, the week previous to our reaching Chicago. I suppose you will call it a rehearsal; women are so prone to evade the truth in these matters; but I swear Savelli saw something better than the actress in your face when you kissed him that night."

A second burning flush of angry color followed this announcement.

"What right have you," she began by pulling her hand away from him, and at that moment saw Savelli approaching them. In her proud irritation she felt that he spoke the truth, when she continued with spirit, —

"I will only vindicate my position so far with you, as to say I have no sort of interest in Mr. Savelli, as a man; I considered him only as an actor." She abruptly left them, bowing coldly to Savelli, as she hurried below to relieve her feelings by a little girlish cry.

"What is the trouble with Miss Kent?" inquired Savelli. "She seemed a trifle stiff and cool as she passed me just now."

"Oh nothing more than what sometimes happens to a young lady who finds herself interested," replied John King in a teasing way; adding "She was just now explaining to me the scene I happened to witness in her dressing-room."

"Explaining what?"

John King laughed amusedly, answering his impatience with great deliberation, "Why the truth, I suppose, that it was a bit of pretty rehearsal. You know I thought it might have been a genuine love affair, Savelli; but she has just repudiated the charge with indignation. It is quite evident if a lady's word can be trusted, Savelli, she does not care for you in the least."

"If you have the lady's confidence, I think it should be sacred; we will not discuss it, if you please," was the young Italian's gallant reply.

"You are right, Savelli; having the honor of Miss Kent's confidence, I have no more intention of making it a matter of general comment that you would do under similar circumstances; but in this particular case, Savelli, I thought she might be too deeply interested in a handsome fellow of my acquaintance;

so deeply interested in fact, as to bring herself into unpleasant conjunction with Miss Winter. I would not like to see her made unhappy." A look of dark displeasure crossed the face of the handsome fellow at King's side as he muttered something savage under his breath, after which both men paced the deck for some time in moody silence together. At length they were joined by other promenaders, who accosted them pleasantly as they passed the star and his manager. Finally Miss Kent re-appeared under the protection of her friend Madame De Sequeria. The two ladies walked and talked together with such deep self-absorption as to seem utterly oblivious of the gentlemen whose gallantries were generally supposed to be so acceptable to them.

Savelli was at a loss to understand the coolness which had suddenly arisen between them, and of course attributed it to the wrong cause. He began also to emerge a little from the fog of artistic bewilderment, so far as to take a plain account of things. Insensibly he had been led on by the intrigues of Miss Winter, who was clever only as a schemer, so far as to become considerably compromised with her. He began now to perceive that there was a certain other young lady in the world who appeared to be strongly attractive and very desirable as a companion. He had not hitherto been accustomed to think of the companionship of women. He was so puzzled and distressed by the complication of his ideas of honor, as brought into connection with his newly stirred emotions, that he felt unusually savage with himself, with the man at his side, with Florence Winter ; in fact with everybody who had anything to do with the affair. Then he reflected still further that Miss Kent was evidently interested in King, and he thought it unfortunate for her ; judging King as he did, from a man's standpoint, he concluded he was not worthy of

so noble a gift. This girl needed a brother's care ; could he give her that protection without—he turned impatiently upon King, cutting the Gordian knot of his perplexities by a single stroke of decision, namely, to fly the temptation which meant a dangerous double obligation.

“King !” King started ; so sharply had he broken the silence at last by pronouncing his name, in his deep, tremendous voice. “I have changed my mind about remaining in London. I think I will go on immediately to Italy.”

King's face grew radiant. “Indeed, Alessandro,” he rejoined heartily, “I see the Lover's impatient haste to meet a certain, fair, despotic lady. After the tempest comes the calm, after the voyage comes the charm, and we will all shortly drink your health, Sandro my boy, in London, to your good speed to fair Florence, and the charming villa Savelli.”

Dumfounded and checkmated, wrathful but impotent, Savelli stood still, frowning and staring at the amused and diplomatic face of the manager. King smoked his cigar, smiled at the shore, at the sky, at Judith, anywhere, except to look upon the dark face, or to meet the perplexed gaze of the angry young actor.

“Damn it, King !” he burst forth at length in uncontrollable rage, “I feel as though I was in the presence of Iago. You are inexplicable to me.” With which he strolled away and disappeared from the deck.

“There goes the second one off my hands,” laughed King softly to himself. “A pair of fire-crackers. If I manage them well, it will be a merry fourth of July. So far, at least, I have braved all of their humors and have not yet been killed by their tremendous explosion ; so much light and fire,” he continued his amused musing, “always displays the nature of combustibles ; everything being blown out in a fury.”

This remark brought him about, facing Judith and Madame De Sequeria. He gallantly threw away his cigar and raising his hat he stood holding it in his hand, with the polished air of politeness so natural to him, as he waited for them to pass him, but venturing the remark as they did so, that "Perhaps they knew that Mr. Savelli was about to leave immediately for Italy ; he hoped our fair ladies would join with him in congratulation and good wishes to speed his early departure."

Madame De Sequeria stopped. The faint line of color left Judith's lips.

"Going to Italy ! Why this sudden change ?" inquired madame indignantly, adding, hurriedly, "surely he is the most inconsistent fellow I ever knew."

"I believe Miss Winter is in Florence, is she not ?" inquired King, looking at Judith attentively, who, with an air of offended silence, still stood with her glance steadily fixed upon the floor.

"Oh, I know you, King !" reproached madame, shrugging her shoulders, "and I guess you are piqued at something which you cannot help, so that you choose to manœuvre and upset things generally. Do you know, King, you are a sensitive fellow, and I have always found that sensitive persons are inclined to be malicious. Being wounded, their first impulse is to retaliate. But, King," she expostulated in merry sarcasm, "it is so ungenerous to strike a woman !"

King seemed to sense the true intention of madame's ambiguous remark, as he turned away from them a little abruptly, while Judith was not too obtuse to respond to the sharp cut of madame's tongue by another blaze of color surging over her fair face.

CHAPTER XV.

THE landing at Liverpool was characterized by the usual hurry and confusion incident to all disembarking and looking up of baggage. The place impressed Judith unpleasantly as smelling of fish and beer. The buildings looked squalid and smoky, and the women also, as if they were a city of tipplers. Accompanying this dreary aspect was the painful prospect of an immediate parting with Savelli for an indefinite period. With all the other uncomfortable sensations consequent upon travel and change were those feelings that she had been slighted in favor of an unworthy and inferior woman. This bred in her bearing an air of proud resentment toward the really unoffending actor. During their walk down the gang plank together, she kept her eyelids persistently lowered, and her face coldly turned aside in an effort to hide the rebellious tears which would have betrayed how sad and heavy was her heart. To all of madame's amiable chatter she briefly replied that she was "disappointed,"—disappointed, poor child!—so disappointed that she saw Liverpool through the mists of tears, and yearned only for the privacy of some room where her grief might be properly expressed in the freedom of a good cry. Finally she heard Savelli saying to her, "We are quite ready, Miss Kent; I shall accompany King to London, when I think perhaps, I had better hurry on to Italy." He spoke hesitatingly, looking inquiringly into the pale, sad face of the girl, with a touch of pathetic entreaty in his soft, black eyes, which she could not see, of course, as she dared not trust her glance to meet his, lest the truth should become apparent that his going away was a cruel wound.

"I suppose Mr. King told you I had concluded it might be better that I should go on immediately?" he continued to interrogate. He hoped she would signify her regret by asking him to linger a little longer; and that she would offer the charming inducement of her companionship during his stay. Instead, she apathetically took her bag from his hand, remarking as she seated herself at Madame's side, "Yes, I believe he told me." She did not even say, "I am pleased that you go so far as London." He turned reluctantly away to join King in another part of the carriage. When they finally arrived in London, the gentlemen made themselves jointly useful in securing the ladies' luggage and a carriage, whereupon Madame, who was "a whole host" in herself, declared they were extremely obliged to them for their services, but required nothing further of them.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Savelli, you have changed your mind about remaining in London, as it will break up so many pleasant arrangements. Judith and I must now go unattended, as we cannot sacrifice one gentleman between us; it would be so dreadfully uncomfortable, not knowing which one he was bound by the laws of chivalry to attend."

King stared; this woman was a little more than a match for him. Judith smiled with covert amusement, while Savelli looked whole interrogation points.

"Oh, no!" explained madame, sweetly, "I could not allow Judith to go running around London with you alone, Mr. King; there are proprieties which we are bound to consider."

"That will fix him, I guess," laughed madame, hilariously, when they were once closed inside the cab and being driven on to their destination. "Oh, he will go of course!" remarked Judith, disconsolately.

"Of course," consented madame, philosophically,

"but I know Westminster and the Kensington as well as either John King or Savelli ; we can get on tolerably well without their attendance, my dear. I assure you, that the attendance of a whole regiment of men will not secure you a seat in all England. They are a bearish lot of people, who will show you things as if your eyes were a pair of magnetized pockets, that could attach and hold all London in your gaze. It is so different in Paris ; people are so polite to you there ; they seem to know by instinct that you have bunions and faint spells, so they find delightful chairs and cushions for you to sit upon ; but if you should go sight seeing a thousand years in London, they would never know you sufficiently well to offer you a seat. I think if Savelli had remained," she rattled on volubly, "I should not have tortured myself to have shown you everything as I must now do, I suppose. He has no bunions, dear boy, and could help you to stand it, looking at things, and trying to find out how many wives Henry the Eighth had and beheaded."

"But why not John King?" inquired Judith, emerging somewhat from her gloom. Madame put up her forefingers, shaking her head in smiling wonder at the young woman.

"Don't you know, Judith, that the world says he is a naughty man?" but Judith ignored the significance of madame's remark, either through her loyal love of defending her weak and absent friend, or to pique madame into further exposures ; she replied with an air of perversity :

"Now do you know, I've found him rather nice, at times, Olivia. Sometimes I am half in love with him ; he teases me a great deal of course, but then there are other times when he has a charm and grace which is very captivating to me."

"Fie !" responded madame, contemptuously, "he is

well enough for me to look after in an elderly fashion, but he is not a proper person for you to be intimately associated with, Judith, and you know it. You confessed as much to me once upon a time in a certain letter."

"But that was long ago. Since then I have discovered much in him that would naturally interest a woman who might like to shape a man's life by making herself a little governor on the engine which drives it to so much that is great and dangerous, when not properly regulated and controlled." Madame looked at her scornfully.

"Do you think, you small, soft woman, that you could regulate and control a strong man like John King? You know better; you are simply flirting with a reckless fancy."

"Do you dislike him so much, yet treat him so well, Olivia?"

"On the contrary, I like him very much; despite his moral lapses, he is rather a lovable man; but he is not to be trusted."

"Why, Olivia? I have my reason for thinking so, but I want yours?"

"Because he cannot trust himself, Judith."

Madame chirped merrily as they crossed Piccadilly—she was very fond of London; but to Judith it was disappointing. Everything about her had taken the hue of her thoughts, which were gloomy because of the chilling farewell from Alessandro at the station.

They found their rooms delightfully located, but Judith, flinging off her traveling cloak, had barely taken a hasty survey of the apartments, when, to madame's surprise, she threw herself into a chair, sobbing as though her heart would break.

Madame stood in the middle of the room, her eyes opened wide in astonishment.

"Judith ! Judith, dear ! are you ill ?"

For a moment there was no reply, then with a fresh burst of sobs, Judith answered:

"I am so—so—homesick."

"Homesick ! oh, my dear, that is foolish ; now I assure you that in all my experience I have found shopping a most effective and complete cure for homesickness ; suppose you dress and come out with me while I invest in a hat. I noticed," Olivia continues, "as we came along in the cab, that the style of hats seem quite different from the one or two with which I am provided, and I must see what I can find this afternoon."

This announcement seemed to Judith, accustomed as she was to madame's never failing energy, a trifle unnatural ; it would be more becoming if Olivia should pretend to be tired ; why she had not been in London more than thirty minutes ; in fact, she should "assume a virtue, though she had it not." Madame's power of rejuvenation was for once a source of annoyance to her friend.

Madame, ignorant of what is passing in Judith's mind, continues her quiet little monologue :

"I think Louise of Regent Street will have something to my liking."

"I can't go out ! I can't," sobbed Judith, "I am wretched !"

"A very bad attack, my dear !" madame says quietly, as she busies herself with changing her gown for a becoming street costume. This accomplished she made one last plea to Judith, who is deaf to all entreaties.

Madame finally leaves, telling Judith with a remarkable amount of cheerfulness, that she might dine and spend the evening with friends, as the door closes upon madame's departing figure. Judith's sobs burst forth afresh, as she thinks bitterly to herself :

Laugh, and Olivia laughs with you ; " weep and you weep alone."

There she lay, poor little foolish child, and cried, and cried, until overcome with exhaustion she fell asleep. She awoke much refreshed and rang for lunch ; after which she looked at herself in the mirror and broke into a merry laugh.

"Perhaps after all she had simply been hungry ;" then she wished she had gone with Olivia ; the thought of spending the evening alone was not a very pleasant prospect, but quite her own fault ; certainly no one else was to blame. She was nearly at her wit's end as to how the time should be passed when the door opened and Madame De Sequeria hastily entered the room. She looked at Judith's eyes, brighter for having been washed by tears, and at the dimpling mouth ; then madame smiled a laugh in which Judith joined a soft contralto.

"Judith dear, would you absolutely refuse to go to dinner with Sandro and John King ? Because if not, they will call for us at six-thirty."

"They have not left for the continent then ?" Judith exclaimed, her face radiant with joy.

"I met them," madame reiterates with a touch of derision, "consequently they have not left for the continent."

"How foolishly happy you look," remarked Olivia an hour later, as Judith stood before her in her white dinner gown ; "Which one of these men really is it ?"

"Neither, Olivia, I assure you," smiled Judith, drawing on her long gloves. "It is the dinner I am thinking of, Savelli orders a dinner with such good taste."

"Taste !" and madame shrugs her shoulders, "Taste !" she reiterates contemptuously, "I should say so by the way the viands disappear. You look very

well, Judith, but frightfully expectant ; I should advise you to modify that expression a little before the gentlemen ; like my friend D'Artsman, in Savelli's after dinner speech, ' You have much to learn.' "

Simultaneously with this remark, John King and Savelli are announced.

It was so cleverly arranged by the diplomatic Madame De Sequeria that Judith found herself at Savelli's side when they went to dinner, which was a very pleasant affair ; and from thence they set out for the theatre. If John King was disappointed, it was not like him to furnish any evidence of that fact to the curious observation of his companions. He was naturally disposed to keep all his externals cool and philosophic, reserving his inner tempest for a private occasion, one of his own favorite aphorisms being, " A vanquished hero, if wise, will conceal his defeat." After they had entered the carriage, Savelli suggested that they should go to Daly's.

" I hear there is an American playing there with tremendous success."

" If it will please the ladies, I certainly do not object," responded John King. " But who is the star, Savelli?"

" Really, King, I have a bad memory for everything excepting my lines ; faces and names are always uncertain and puzzling to me ; the most phenomenal statement I ever heard made about any one was, that James Blaine could remember every person to whom he had been introduced, so that on meeting them at any time or place he was able to give them a proper salutation."

" I sometimes forget names, but never a face," responded King.

" It is my opinion," laughed Madame De Sequeria, " you could easily forget both if it were convenient, King."

A slight touch of annoyance stained the firm morbidizza of King's cheek.

"Well, Mr. King, you need not blush, I am sure, for such a convenient memory," defended Judith. "I consider it a virtue in you I shall strive to emulate."

"Is it possible life has furnished any experience you would like to forget, Miss Kent?"

"Are you not straining the question a little, King, to meet your own complaint?" inquired Savelli.

"I am unhappy in conversation this evening; perhaps I had better keep silent, and so recover my wandering wits."

"If you dare to do anything so stupid, you old darling," cried madame, tapping King playfully with her fan, "I will get out of the carriage and never, never ride with you again. The idea of riding with a dumb man, preposterous!"

"You presume, my dear Olivia, to talk to Mr. King as if he were your grandfather," complained Judith.

"Why not?" inquired madame with asperity. "I am sure my grandfather would consider it a compliment if he were alive."

"And I must consider it a compliment that he is dead," laughed King, good humoredly. "Come, come, my dear Olivia! you have made a sufficient number of disagreeable speeches this evening to condemn you as a cynic; whereas I am only thirty-two in years, but fifty in experience; I grow inwardly old and gray, while madame keeps herself young and charming as a woman should. I beg leave to declare in the presence of these witnesses that your bonnet is decidedly original and very becoming."

"Thank you, King!" responded madame, heartily, who had just sufficient vanity to swallow a compliment with good grace.

It was most true that madame had a secret appetite for notice, which is sure to attack the female mind

when first it becomes aware of the cynical touch of time upon some of the coveted charms of physical beauty. Despite the roundness of her figure and the freshness of her florid complexion, madame's color was too deep for the rose tint of girlhood, her figure a trifle too heavy, her pretty little feet disfigured by bunions, and the first detestable lines of age were assiduously implanting themselves at the corners of her merry blue eyes. There was, nevertheless, a spirit and gayety about her which greatly offset the ravages of time, leading not only madame herself, but all the young life with which she fraternized, to forget that she was nearing the mellow age of fifty.

While engaged in this sort of banter, the cab, making good speed, had brought them to the door of the handsome theatre. Still retaining his position by Judith's side, Savelli got out, assisting his companion, who looked curiously at the big posters standing in the entrance.

EILEEN KENDALL.

UNPARALLELED PERFORMANCE OF THE CELEBRATED CAMILLE.

"That name sounds familiar," commented Judith, "where have I heard of her?"

She turned her puzzled face toward Savelli's.

"Eileen Kendall," pursued Savelli, as he glanced at a stand of photographs in the entrance. "Oh, I do remember; she was with me the first season of John King's management in New York. By Jove! this is unexpected. I wonder what King will say?"

Simultaneously, Savelli and Judith turned their heads toward King and madame, who were standing just behind them. Madame, with a little, teasing smile of humor displayed upon her face, which she

was endeavoring to restrain in a manner that disfigured her pretty mouth, while King, greatly disconcerted, stands with his mustache between his teeth, his lips hardened into a pale line, his eyes from beneath their frowning brows fixed in a silent stare of amazement upon the gaudy poster.

"This girl has won, King! In the hard battle against fate, and the dominance of men!" said madame, looking steadily at him. "I must rejoice in her hard earned victory."

Something flashed out of the expressive eyes of the man at her side as he allowed their glance to rest for a moment upon madame's, which caused her to lay her hand upon his arm in a silent expression of sympathy. Why she should pity him he could not exactly explain, unless she saw in his pale, pained face an expression of grief and remorse that seemed to atone somewhat for his cruelty and guilt. After all, it wasn't so bad an affair as many others she had known, thought madame, as they entered their box at the theatre together, since neither has ruined the other, man and woman being in the heyday of success what was the need of recrimination and tears. Diplomacy being the manly art of men, John King pulled himself together with what bravery he could summon, so that nothing in his manner should suggest to Judith and Madame De Sequeria the absorbing occupation of his mind. His bearing toward them became at once graceful and gay, as he facetiously forced conversation that seemed to him like a mechanical outpouring of meaningless words.

When Eileen Kendall came upon the stage, for a few moments only his face betrayed him, as full of intense curiosity he leaned across the box rail, fixing a strong, magnetic look upon the actress' face, which had the effect of drawing her gaze to his own. As their eyes met, the irrepressible memories of the past

seemed to overcome them both. The arm of King resting upon the curtain rail of the box shook so visibly, that he withdrew it, suddenly pressing his hand hard down upon his knee; while Eileen, thus brought unexpectedly face to face with the man whom she had loved and could never cease to desire, blanched under her make-up, and reeled slightly backward, like a person who has received a sudden blow and is about to fall. It would have been impossible for the least vain of men not to have correctly construed the flash of delight and wonder that rapidly succeeded the pallor and trembling of surprise, so visible to all, but correctly conjectured only by two or three persons in the audience.

"My God!" said Madame De Sequeria under her breath, "that poor fool woman loves him yet."

"I am not forgotten," was King's flattering thought.

Eileen Kendall played that evening the real tragedy of her own bitter life; she did not act Camille, she was Camille; only the Armand she played to was in the box, fascinated and bewildered by her performance.

The incident passed without any comment from King and his friends upon the meeting of the new star and her old manager.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was while madame was answering a huge pile of correspondence one morning that Judith, perfectly equipped in a most becoming riding-habit, entered the room. With sparkling eyes, the nervous colour coming and going in her face, she stood before

madame for her critical inspection ; she did not speak at first, for it had been arranged between her and Savelli that this should be a surprise to madame.

Laying down her pen, Olivia expressed by the motion of her hand a desire that she should make the proper evolutions necessary for the inspection of each detail. This Judith did, feeling like a dummy in one of the shops which twirl at a very slight touch ; she thought she could hear the whirr and rattle of the rod in its socket, but concluded it was the jingle of the silver spurs upon the smart boots which she wore.

The inspection ended, madame's verdict was as follows :

"Beautiful ! beautiful, my dear ! You are a picture !" Then with a little grief-stricken expression, she asked : "But why so secret about it, Judith ?" Without waiting for a reply, she continued : "To think you could get to and from the tailor's without my once suspecting ! Quite a little joke on me ; but the habit will be a great acquisition to your *stage wardrobe*."

Olivia did not approve of Judith "mounting a strange animal," even for the interesting experiment of riding in the Row ; hence, the building of the habit had been kept a secret from madame. Judith planning that while in the first transports of admiration, the disagreeable fact was to be announced to her dear Olivia, that she, Judith, was to ride in the Row that very morning with Savelli.

The transports had been all Judith anticipated, but her courage had ebbed upon hearing that last remark of madame's : "It will be a great acquisition to your stage wardrobe."

Olivia, who never suspected her antipathy against equestrian exercise was to be so utterly disregarded, turned once more to her letters, while Judith crossed and recrossed the room to the accompaniment of the

quick movement of madame's pen, meditating as to how the storm, which she instinctively felt must burst upon her when the truth was known, could be averted. She finally sat down upon the edge of the chair in a rather disconsolate attitude, hoping that Savelli might be announced to mollify by his presence the anticipated burst of wrath.

Madame turned suddenly and looked critically at Judith. "Well, my dear, why don't you go and take it off?"

"Well ——" and Judith hesitated; "You see, dear, Savelli and I are going out."

"But not in that rig!" madame emphasized the word "rig," in a way that Judith thinks is positively cruel.

"Oh, yes," she replied, "we are to ride in the Row this morning, I promised Mr. Savelli," she continues, as she makes an unsuccessful effort to carry conviction with her words, "it is perfectly safe."

"Safe!" Madame, but for her excellent breeding, could have shrieked the word "safe!" She reiterates: "There is not a saddle-horse in London that is safe! A cab horse! yes, one might mount a cab horse, the most knowing beast I ever saw—but if I ever witnessed base ingratitude, Judith, it is in this instance; no! don't speak to me, please!" as Judith is about to attempt reasoning the matter out.

"To think that my trip is to be spoiled, utterly spoiled by your vanity; it is just your romantic fancy, my dear, to be a person who rides in the Row, in one of those perfectly fitting habits one reads about in English novels."

Judith cannot surpress a smile, while madame continues, this time with tears in her eyes:

"I know you imagine you are Dodo; that is it, my dear, you imagine you are a Dodo, and Savelli one of those poor misguided men, yes, that is it," with a

decided nod of her head, "you wish to imagine yourself Dodo ; but let me tell you that the Dodo is extinct, Mr. Kipling says so ; 'As extinct as the Dodo,' is his exact phrase."

Madame sniffs once or twice and wipes away the tears, while Judith torn by a desire to please madame, but with a still stronger desire to go with Savelli, finally expostulates :

"I am not impersonating any character, I simply wish to ride."

"Of course you wish to ride, of course, and go my dear, go by all means," madame goes on heedlessly, "don't consider my feelings for an instant, but let me tell you, Judith, you may be as obsolete as the Dodo if you wish." Judith thought she detected a mild aside which sounded like, "and as obstinate," "but don't ask me," madame proceeds, "to collect your bones, or your brains, or whatever may be scattered about, to send back to America." With this final declaration of war madame vanished into the farther room, whence Judith was about to follow her, but was detained by Savelli, who upon being announced came into the room smiling ; handsome and very boyish too, Judith thought he looked in his English riding togs. She hurriedly related her recent little altercation with madame at which Savelli laughed.

"What nonsense ! can I not pacify her in some way ?" But to all prayers of both to come forth and be comforted, madame turned a deaf ear.

"Mr. King is to come later to fetch her to the Row," Savelli remarks, at which Judith goes to the door and imparts the information, adding :

"You know, Olivia dear, it will be so nice and comfortable to sit there on one of those little green chairs."

"Comfortable !" cries Olivia, "they look most uncomfortable ! they are much too small for comfort."

So Savelli and Judith are obliged to depart without having extracted from madame the desired promise to meet them later in company with John King.

"Perhaps King will succeed better than we have done ; do smile, Miss Kent, it is not such a serious matter if madame doesn't come, is it ?" Savelli inquired as they went down the stairs together.

"Oh, no ! not so very serious," Judith replied, "but I dislike to offend Olivia, even——" she hesitated.

"Even to please me," Savelli finished, with an earnest expression in his eyes. Judith smiled but made no reply ; after all, she thinks, "Pretty phrases cost a man nothing just as they mean nothing."

Passing through the vestibule, the door of which is held open by an obsequious servant, Judith, upon beholding the handsome mount that Savelli has provided for her, temporarily forgets her quarrel with Olivia.

"Now, Miss Kent !" smiled Savelli, holding his hand, and with a light touch of her foot upon it, Judith is in the saddle.

John King had not taken kindly to the arrangement which Savelli had made for him to act as madame's escort, while he and Judith were enjoying their canter together ; nevertheless he had not betrayed the least resentment, but promised quite cheerfully to call for madame, which he did, only to find her in such a state of hopeless anxiety that even to the prosaic mind of John King it was irresistibly funny, and it was only by the most skillful means that he was kept from betraying his humorous view of the situation. They went out talking amicably together, but to all persuasions to visit that portion of the park devoted to equestrians, Madame returns a decided "No !" However, she does not refuse to accept an invitation to drive with Mr. King, anywhere but to the Row. Madame's curiosity is too active however to lay supine. Upon

Judith and Savelli taking their last turn in the direction of the arch, they came upon—Was it possible?—King and madame, seated upon those recently condemned green chairs. Madame looked very comfortable, until finding herself observed her face resumed its former grief-stricken expression.

King arose, and, as he approached them asked pleasantly, "If they had enjoyed their ride?"

"Immensely!" Savelli responded, as he and Judith drew up within speaking distance.

"Good morning, madame!" says Savelli, relapsing into French as he frequently does with madame. "Does not mademoiselle look charming this morning? She sits her horse perfectly; and you see no bones are yet broken." At which madame replies, "She may look well enough, but I doubt if she will be content to ride once; no, it must be until the predicted catastrophe has happened."

Savelli laughed, his deep, rolling laugh at madame's perverse desire to be upon the negative side of everything. At this point, Judith's horse growing a little restive, madame exclaims, "That she should think Judith might refrain at least from allowing the brute to trample her dearest friends to death!" with which she hurriedly rises from her chair and in company with King enters a waiting cab, when they turn in the direction of St. James, to be followed leisurely by Savelli and Judith.

How it all happened no one, not even madame, attempted to explain, but as they were crossing the busy thoroughfare in front of the arch, the mild mannered horse attached to the cab took fright. He threw Cabby ignominiously from his seat and tore madly along. Judith gave a cry of terror.

"He has bolted," burst from Savelli. "Shall I start in pursuit or remain with you, Miss Kent?" During this speech both have slightly quickened their horses'

pace. "We will both go," she replied with a tightening of her lips, at the same time urging her horse somewhat faster. "But you can not keep your seat," and considerable fear is evinced in Savelli's voice.

"Try me!" Judith responds, as grasping the reins more firmly they both bound off after the fast departing cab. Fortunately for that "knowing horse," as madame declared afterward, he took the quietest roads; nevertheless he went very fast, and John King had to exert all his strength to restrain madame from jumping headlong into the road.

"We shall be killed, John King!" she sobbed. "Killed! I tell you he will make for the embankment and the river!" But having passed these safely, Madame De Sequeria sank back relieved for a moment, until the people following the runaway had increased to a crowd, shrieking and yelling to their utmost, which proved a fresh cause of distress to madame.

"Tell them not to make so much noise!" she cried, wringing her hands. "It frightens the horses more!"

"Stop that howling!" shrieked King from the cab window; but the cries for assistance, or rather desistance, were lost in the general confusion which surrounded them. At last the reins caught Olivia's and King's eyes and simultaneously each clutched one. Until this moment King had not felt the least fear; but now as he saw that the beast was in no way lessening his speed, and further realized that they were approaching a busier locality, a certain amount of fear did take possession of his mind. But what could one do with a single rein, as Olivia idiotically persisted in retaining her hold? fortunately she made no attempt to draw it tightly, otherwise much damage might have been done.

"I shall feel better," she gasped, "if I hold to this;

it does not matter, the end is near," she continued with melancholy resignation.

At this moment sounds of galloping hoofs reached King's ears ; instinctively he felt it must be Judith and Savelli following ; the speed of the cab seemed to be slackening somewhat, but poor madame was as white as death.

"I think the worst is over," John King said quietly. Sure enough, slower, and yet more slowly rolled the cab ; weaker, and weaker grew the beast, until with a final unsuccessful effort to go one step further, hands were reached forth to grasp the bridle, and they came to a full stop before an undertaker's shop.

Madame assisted by King stepped out of the cab, when, beholding the sign of the undertaker, she managed inconveniently to faint. At this point Judith and Savelli arrived, their horses covered with sweat, and their own disordered, frightened appearance adding dramatic effect to the scene. Upon seeing the perplexing situation in which King was involved, Savelli hastily dismounted for the purpose of assisting him bear the ponderous figure of Madame De Sequeria into the shop that had so greatly alarmed her.

"Poor Olivia ! it is all my fault," and with a feeling of self-reproach Judith bent over madame, to assist in the effort that was being made to restore her.

"Oh, no, Miss Kent ! it was an accident. I think she is reviving," comments King.

Madame does open her eyes, but on beholding her gruesome surroundings she gave a shriek of terror and relapsed once more into her former state of unconsciousness.

"It is the coffins !" exclaims Judith.

As madame responds once more to the vigorous efforts being made to restore her, Savelli assures her that she is not dead ; and madame, very much alive,

risers to her feet and begins to consider the most advantageous and expeditious way of reaching home.

"Will you have a cab, dear?" Judith asks.

"A cab, never."

"By the underground, then?"

"I should be smothered."

"A bus?"

"No! no! nothing with a horse attached to it."

What was to be done?

"I shall walk," says madame, emphatically.

"Walk!" they all exclaim, "but you are miles from St. James."

"Nevertheless, I shall walk."

"But you are too weak to walk, Olivia dear," remonstrates Judith.

"I shall walk."

This determination is both serious and funny?

"Mr. King, will you walk with her?" inquired Judith.

"Why, yes, certainly," responded King.

So Judith and Savelli leave Olivia in the care of King. Judith, feeling much relieved to know that a serious accident has been averted, smiles upon Savelli as they pursue their way together.

"I tell you, Miss Kent, this will be an experience to laugh over when madame has fully recovered; that horse was controlled, I believe, to a certain extent by madame's peculiar hypnotic power. Was there anyone like her?"

"Do come in and wait their return, Mr. Savelli," invites Judith, as they dismounted before the door. The waiting groom takes both horses, while Judith enters the house followed by Savelli.

"They will be a long time coming, undoubtedly," Judith comments as they stepped into the pretty little sitting-room. "We had better have lunch; will you excuse me until I have changed my habit?"

"Certainly, mademoiselle ; but can I stay to lunch in these?" Savelli gives a deprecatory glance at his clothes.

"Of course, they are very becoming," Judith avers.

He turned toward her with a bow of a cavalier. "My lady Judith is so charming in any dress, I always find the last the most becoming," he responded, gallantly.

"A pretty compliment," Judith thinks, "and I so dislike compliments." Nevertheless she arrays herself in a remarkably becoming gown, when she reappears to find luncheon spread, at which they both seat themselves. For a time madame and John King wending their weary way St. Jamesward are quite forgotten. The time passed very agreeably ; at last the table was cleared, and as the day had grown dull and foggy, both drew up to the open grate, where Savelli sat smoking while Judith chattered ; or Savelli chatted, and Judith—oh, no ! Judith did not smoke, she simply rolled Savelli's cigarettes for him, in the daintiest, prettiest, manner, just as she rolled them for madame.

It was four o'clock when John King and madame appeared upon the scene. Now, if either Savelli or Judith were looking forward to a fatigued, hapless, miserable Olivia, they were both mistaken. For it transpired that upon starting homeward she had discovered that they were in the vicinity of some pawn-shops. If there was one thing madame delighted in more than another, it was a pawn-shop. It naturally happened during her inspection and purchase of antiques and useless articles, she forgot the terror with which her recent accident had inspired her and became in fact rejuvenated. From pawn-shop to pawn-shop she dragged King, his patience becoming exhausted in proportion as his fatigue and appetite increased.

"I feel quite myself, Mr. King," Madame De Sequeria chirped merrily ; madame was accustomed to chirp merrily when people became exhausted in her service. King looked hurt but said nothing. It was only when he was on the point of dropping all the purchases and subsiding to a neighboring curbstone, that it occurred to dear madame he might be both tired and hungry. Then she had suggested lunch ; after which more curiosity shops were investigated and more antiques purchased. John King's temper was exhausted, his arms were nearly broken, his mustache gnawed to a single hair.

"Poor dear, he is tired ! but these things are so antique and valuable," madame explained consolingly, when King had dropped into a corner the fire-dogs, brass candle-sticks and warming-pans which depended from all available points upon which madame could hang a treasure, which altogether weighed some forty or fifty pounds.

"Are you tired, King ?" Savelli's outward appearance is quite serious. "You bear a striking resemblance to a Jew pack-peddler."

"I really think," King returns tartly, "that my labors to-day in the service of the fair should establish forever my reputation for gallantry." With this remark he throws himself into the most comfortable chair in the room.

Certainly it was enough to drive a man mad ; all he had been through that day, while it was most evident that Savelli had lounged here before the fire, gracefully entertaining and charmingly entertained. It required considerable philosophy on King's part to assume in such a situation any appearance of amiability, but suppressing all exhibition of temper he dropped quietly into the conversation, while madame, with Savelli's assistance, proceeded to arrange her recently purchased fire-irons, candle-sticks, warming-

pans and the rest of her paraphernalia about the room for the edification of the company.

It was thought advisable by madame, to leave London on the second of July, having arranged to meet her favorite nephew, Lenartson, in Paris on that date. King and Savelli were to leave a few days earlier, but Judith's patriotic spirit prevailed, and the party all remained over for Minister Bayard's reception upon the "Fourth," leaving for Paris the day following. King and Savelli crossed to Havre, while Judith and madame reached Paris by the way of New Haven and Dieppe.

CHAPTER XVII.

UPON their arrival in Paris madame and Judith drove to No. — Rue Drouot. It was not an imposing structure before which the voiture stopped, and madame hesitated before allowing the luggage to be lifted from the position it shared with the coucher. Judith was advised to retain her seat while madame went to investigate. The concierge was not at her post, so madame painfully climbed the five long flights of stairs, gasping at each turn as "Bank," "Tenement to Rent," and various other signs met her gaze, silently informing her that those at least were not her points of destination. Arriving upon the sixth floor at last, breathless and exhausted, madame paused to survey the situation. At last she rang the bell, which was answered by a servant who was happy to say that Madame and Monsieur K—— were within, awaiting the arrival of two American ladies.

"Heaven be praised there are no more stairs!"

madame softly ejaculated, as she entered the salon, where she was greeted by a tall, graceful woman. As Madame K—— glanced inquiringly behind Olivia for Judith, Madame De Sequeria explained that her friend was below, and asked if she might speak to her from the window, as she thinks dubiously of those five long flights of stairs.

"Certainly," Madame K—— replied. "Cannot Jean go down ; the luggage must be brought up."

"But I fear the poor child will not understand ; she has rather an imperfect command of the language ;" upon which madame puts her head out of the window, shrilly calling to the speck below that she is to get out of the carriage and come up stairs immediately. Judith, whose mind is otherwise occupied, sits gazing about at the shop windows unheeding madame's command.

"Hie ! hie ! Judith ! Judith dear !" madame calls. As Judith does not appear to comprehend, she practically shoots forth her arms, belaboring the air with her umbrella, attracting the attention of the passers-by. One would never suspect, seeing madame in this distracted condition, that she was the dignified and elegant lady that she could appear upon occasion ; but madame was gifted with a spirit of humor which led her unconsciously to act a comedy in real life. It became quite evident to the distracted lady above that the complacent speck of humanity below is likely to sit there all night, unless she redoubles her efforts, whereupon she begins to shout more vigorously : "Hie ! hie ! Judith ! Judith !" Finding it useless to call, madame concluded to descend those five flights of stairs. The first intimation which Judith had of madame's presence, was a puffing at her elbow. She turned to behold Olivia's indignant face, upon which Judith is all penitence for her temporary fit of abstraction.

"It is all right, Judith dear," madame pants, as she pulls herself up by means of the balustrade and an occasional hoist from Judith. As Olivia appeared once more before Madame K——, Judith was properly introduced, after which they were shown to their apartments. Madame K—— informed them that their dinner would be served to them there, as they were undoubtedly too tired to meet the people in the *salle-à-manger*. Judith assisted her dear, tired Olivia to remove her wraps, found her a comfortable chair, and with the appearance of dinner, madame revived.

In the midst of the meal the door was thrown hastily open, after a short, peremptory rap, to admit an elegantly dressed and handsome young man, who rushed in upon them without apology, answering the joyful cry of madame as she rose to greet him by casting himself into her outstretched arms ; even before madame had time to introduce him, Judith recognized in the beautiful Greek face of the young stranger madame's much adored nephew, Lenartson, whose beauty was of so remarkable a type as to have led Whistler to distinguish it by painting him in the Greek attire. The portrait at the present time was in the possession of the Duchess de M——.

"This is," said madame at last, turning blandly upon Judith, "my dear boy, Lenartson. I shall expect you and Miss Kent to gratify my long concealed wishes by falling in love with each other at once." Judith rose, blushing and smiling very sweetly as she offered her hand to the young man.

"I have long since anticipated that wish," he remarked with easy grace, "by failing in love with your excellent pen portrait of Miss Kent. I assure you your voluble and enthusiastic description is far surpassed by the original ——"

Judith interrupted this speech by her brisk objection to this species of gallantry.

"Do not, I beg you, prejudice our good acquaintance by presenting me with your gentlemanly sugar-plums. I assure you, Mr. Lenartson, I prefer spice and acids to so much sweets as are deemed proper for your sex to offer to mine."

"But ——" he smiled, looking into her face inquiringly.

"Yes, I know I am rather good-looking, as you are yourself, but I am sick to death of being talked to about it."

"Anyway," he continued, not ill-pleased by her originality, "you will permit me to say at least that I am very happy to make the charming acquaintance of so sweet and sensible a girl."

"That will do, thank you," she replied, as she resumed her seat at the table by madame's side.

"Oh, yes!" responded madame, tartly, "Judith's vanity runs all to virtue and none to skin; for myself, I see no more weakness in swallowing a compliment to your complexion than to taking such monstrous doses of flattery paid to one's worth. I think it is very pleasant to be pink and white, with regular features and soft dove throat and red hair like Judith's; but our dear young lady here has a passionate hypocrisy for good behavior."

As they finished their dinner madame suggests, in her breezy fashion, that they drive for awhile, whereupon Lenartson not only consents but began to volubly describe to Judith the delights and wonders of Paris, until the girl, full of the eager excitement and impatience natural to youth, began to put on her hat and gloves, urging madame at the same time to hurry her preparations. Before they parted that night it was arranged that Lenartson should take up his abode at the Pension. "He will be such a help and protection, Judith dear," madame had remarked that night in the privacy of her room, "and he knows

everything, I assure you. Do you not think him very handsome?"

"Very!" Judith responded, as she bade madame an affectionate good night. The next morning Judith is awakened about eleven o'clock by the maid who brings the morning chocolate, *une petite pain*, and the letters. Slipping into a pretty silk *négligée*, Judith makes a pilgrimage to madame's apartments armed with the tray. Her dear Olivia is like a great beautiful baby, just awakened, she declares, as she surveys madame from the doorway. Olivia laughs at Judith's efforts to walk steadily across the room in order to keep the contents of the tray from spilling. Judith's bright hair falls across her face, impeding both sight and progress, *une petite pain* bobbed off the tray to the floor, and it is with much difficulty that Judith manages to place the tray safely upon the stand by madame's side, after which she curls up in a big chair, and both she and madame discuss their breakfast and letters together. At one o'clock Lenartson calls to take them down to déjeuner. Much curiosity had been felt by the guests of the Pension as to the anticipated arrival of the two American ladies; everyone seemed mentally on tiptoe. An univereal assent of admiration greeted Olivia and Judith as they made a rather imposing entrance with the handsome figure of Lenartson in the background. The formal introductions were a little trying, as each of the sixteen persons sitting about the table rose to bow their acknowledgments. Madame was placed at Lenartson's side opposite Judith, who sat between a Swedish gentleman by the name of Svensen, and a certain Herr Hidman. Judith felt surprisingly at her ease; her two neighbors spoke English well, and the conversation ran in smooth and interesting channels. Both gentlemen vied with each other in their efforts to impart information concerning the guests assembled about the

table. Svensen tells her that the gentleman upon Madame K—'s right is Herr Nordstrom, the Swedish consul ; he speaks no English, but plays the piano beautifully. The tall fraulein opposite Nordstrom is a source of great annoyance to him ; for she insists upon imposing her unwelcome presence continually upon him. Svensen fears his turn will come next, and that he has been selected for the unenviable task of playing agreeable to the most disagreeable person he ever had the misfortune to meet.

"I do not speak to her whatever," Hidman says, joining in the conversation. Hidman's English is most original. "The stout, red-faced gentleman is an actor connected with a Berlin theatre," Svensen continued, "and the lady beyond him is from New York ; she speaks French with a perfect American accent, invariably ending her sentences with a mechanical '*N'est—ce pas, oui, oui ;*' she sings the second '*oui*' a third lower than the first without once varying the tone. The plump young lady sitting still farther down the table," Hidman continues, "requested my eyelashes the other day."

"Your eyelashes?" inquired Judith, glancing into his face ; she beholds his wonderful brown eyes looking out between their long, curling black lashes, as clear and innocent as a child just awakening from an angelic dream. It was not a wonder that the young American girl envied him the possession of such eyes, but it certainly was very bold to speak to him about them.

He adds then that "only an American woman would take such a liberty." This is said thoughtlessly, and Judith was quick to resent it ; upon which he apologizes, "You are not a bit like an American. You do not bluster and talk so loud and fast as many of the American ladies whom I have met. You have repose and grace in you, mademoiselle."

"You are very gallant to say so," returns Judith pleasantly, "however, I fear you have been furnished, for observation, with some poor examples of American ladies."

"Shall you remain long in Paris?" Svensen asked.

"Two months probably," is Judith's reply.

"You will allow me then to show you some of the sights of Paris. Will you not?"

"Before Judith has time to respond, madame, whose weather eye and attentive ear have both been on duty, nods pleasantly and answers, "We should indeed be pleased, Herr Svensen."

"That is what you call in America, getting the 'inside track,' Hidman asserts quietly.

"Yes," laughed Judith.

"And once you have the inside track you never—what do you say—get 'switched off.'"

"Judith, dear," madame interrupts, "I think it is time for the carriage." Madame has planned a shopping tour for the afternoon.

"Must you really go?" asks Hidman as Judith rises.

"Oh, yes, indeed, madame's word is law," and with a pretty bow to the remaining guests Judith follows Olivia and Lenartson out of the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JUDITH and madame had promised to loan Lenartson for one evening to the American guests of the Pension. The Americans were exceedingly proper, and consequently desired to see all the improprieties of Paris; at the last moment Judith and madame were prevailed upon by Lenartson to share his re-

sponsibility ; then Hidman was called into requisition. As the voitures wended their way through to Rue de Martyrs they came so suddenly from the dark streets into the brilliant square that for a moment they were blinded by the effect of dazzling lights. As they passed the "Rat Mort," Lenartson explained to Judith that one might quite safely take a seat just outside of this place to quietly watch the ways of the habitués. "Every one is familiar with the 'Latin Quarter,'" Lenartson continued, "at all hours interesting, but not every one is familiar with the 'Rat Mort,' or 'Bruant's.' The former is patronized by a class of cocottes belonging particularly to this quarter, where an acquaintance of an hour is all that is expected, and the wheel of fortune turns more rapidly than within the 'Latin Quarter' for the cocotte who reigns supreme on one evening, surrounded by a bevy of men, and consequently the recipient of sneering and envious glances from her associates, may be seen upon the following evening wandering disconsolately up and down the Boulevard ; no one seemingly having the slightest desire to bask in the sunshine of her heavily rouged smiles, or watch the graceful gestures and the drooping of the blackened lids in their attitude of assumed modesty."

"Braunts" was farther down the Square, where, after much turning of bolts and bars, the party was admitted to be entertained by various songs, in the choruses of which every one who is familiar is supposed to join. They were assured that Bruant himself would appear at midnight, but this Lenartson declared was a fallacy, for Braunt seldom came to exhibit himself now ; so they had to be content to see the numerous portraits of him upon the wall done by famous artists, trusting to catch a glimpse of him dressed in his corduroys, high boots and sombrero some day upon the Boulevard.

"His songs had made him famous!" madame remarked, "and the place is truly worth seeing if only for the excellent beer one gets, or the pictures and sketches upon the walls; expressing as they do, probably, the bare but unrecognized talent of some great geniuses."

"They will sing a song of welcome to you upon your arrival," Lenartson breaks in, "and call you pigs when you depart; but if you come frequently and the artists come to recognize you, they may grasp you by the hand and save some special bit of poetry to recite, or some enchanting little love melody to sing for your edification." In fact, a poor deformed individual attracted by Judith's charming face informed Lenartson that he would sing particularly for mademoiselle. This song proved such a delicious love song and was sung with so much feeling that it brought tears to the eyes of the audience. Lenartson returned the compliment by reciting Hamlet's soliloquy from the top of the table.

Judith could not resist shaking hands with her musical admirer, thanking him heartily for his song. Madame remonstrated somewhat as they left the place, deploring Judith's democratic spirit, although she would have shaken hands with him herself had Judith not forestalled her. They rattled off across the pavements to the Café de Concierge. The proprietor was originally an actor in Lisbon, afterward a colonel in the Commune, later he was sentenced to New Guinea, having returned to Paris about ten years ago. Judith could easily imagine the red rag bound about that shock of hair. The figure was short and squarely built, but very commanding. Absolute silence was demanded here when the so-called artists, the 'quality' varying as much as the 'quantity,' performed. As they left the Café de Concierge Lenartson explained, while crossing the

square, that they would now inspect the Cabinet de Néant.

They had arrived at the entrance of the "Chamber of Death," which Lenartson had persuaded Judith she should enter, as it was a popular curiosity, and Madame De Sequeria acquiesced, with now and then a faint remonstrance interpolating her consent, such as: "If you take the poor child into that infernal racket, Lenartson, don't, for heaven's sake, expect me to torture myself for your convenience!"

"Racket!" protested Lenartson; "why there is no racket about it at all, my dear auntie."

"What do you call that howling I would like to know? 'Silence de la Chambre de la Mort.' I tell you, Judith, it is a perfectly heathenish old bone-shop, full of uncoffined terrors; it all ought to be arrested and shut up by the police."

By this time they had arrived at the black curtains which closed the inner mysteries of the "Chamber of Death" from the bright, glittering Paris moving around it. Madame burst forth afresh, affected by a new sense of horror with which the gruesome place inspired her.

"I will not permit you, Lenartson, to take Judith into that place! If you want to go yourself and get decomposed and knocked upon the head by the jaw-bone of a dead thing, why I have no authority over such a reprehensible taste; but I vow you shall not spoil Judith's pretty color and upset her nerves by anything so hideous."

"What is it, madame?" inquired Judith, whose curiosity, urged on by Lenartson's spirit of venture on one side, was checked by madame's fear on the other.

"I will tell you, Judith; you will sit at a table made like a coffin—is it a pleasant prospect? No, be quiet; I will not allow any member of my family,

however good-looking, to betray a girl's confidence ; indeed, you should be ashamed of yourself, sir ! When you are seated, you will be served by men wearing death's heads and dressed like undertakers ; each of these precious beauties will approach you with a skull filled with wine—the skull in the hand, I mean—and bearing a monstrous thigh-bone with which he will rap you upon the shoulder. Of course," persisted madame, as she rose in her indignation upon the tips of her toes, and in this comical attitude stood staring down upon them with an air of superior scorn, "if you do not happen to enjoy such delicate pastime, it seems to be the legitimate business of these imps of darkness to increase your aversion by turning delightful paintings into writhing skeletons, and transforming your fair body by thrusting you into a coffin, where you are slowly decomposed for the amusement of more experienced visitors. Oh, it is so funny," sneered madame, "to step from this lovely world of living things into that old skeleton shop, in order that one may be transformed into a grinning corpse for the entertainment of one's friends !"

"For heaven's sake ! is she telling the truth, Mr. Hidman ?"

"Not half of it, my dear——"

"She exaggerates somewhat," declared Lenartson. "You need not go into the coffins unless you are interested in the illusion. It is very curious, however, watching the transformation of the paintings ; and I must confess it is rather suggestive of all that Olivia described."

"I really believe I do not care to go," concluded Judith, who was joined by Hidman and a nervous spinster, who unitedly declared they had no desire to anticipate their end, and preferred to wait for Lenartson and his party outside.

Madame and the nervous spinster seated themselves

at a small table, regardless of the fact that they would be asked to drink by others than the proprietor of the place. Madame declared herself too tired to walk about, but would permit Hidman and Judith to take a turn down the Boulevard. "It was more than a turn they took, however," madame declared afterwards. As they did not return, she became annoyed at the nervous spinster, who fretted and fumed and attracted attention by her fidgety ways, then by a smirking individual who addressed them. Madame rising in a fury of wrath rushed to the entrance of the gruesome 'Cabinet de Néant.' Lenartson was seated with his pilgrims at the coffin-shaped table, when looking up he espied madame's black and white chapeau thrust through the gloomy black hangings, and madame's hurt countenance, so expressive of insulted virtue, gazing about distractedly ; regardless of the attending undertakers and the demand for silence, she delivered herself of the following grief-laden remarks :

"Lenartson, you must come out here at once !"

Before Lenartson had time to reply, an attendant called to madame to remove her head ; at the same time rushing forward he held the curtains together, but madame valiantly poked her black and white chapeaued head into another opening, with this remark :

"Lenartson, I tell you a man has insulted us !"

Lenartson attempted to rise, but was held down by force, the pilgrims imploring him not to leave them in this awful place. Again the attendant had drawn the curtains over madame's head, and this time as she made a puncture below the man's hand, Lenartson began to laugh. "Take your head away !" he cried.

"Where shall I take it to?" Olivia demanded. "Judith and Hidman have left us, gone undoubtedly

to that disreputable restaurant across the Square." Madame referred to the "Dead Rat."

"I tell you I have—" Again the attendant shut madame's head from view, and the remainder of the sentence was lost! Once more the head re-appeared; tears are coursing down madame's cheeks. This being compelled to thrust her head in and out, together with her injured innocence, insulted virtue, and desertion in the streets of Paris, was sufficient cause for a great disturbance of Madame's feelings, but to be told to take her poor old head elsewhere, when she had not a sou to her name, was the climax of all her imaginary woes.

"Oh, if it's money you are without," laughs Lenartson, who now remembers that he is banker for the excursion, "here it is;" and from his position at the table, he tosses a five-franc piece toward the head, and a hand supposedly belonging to it catches the money eagerly. They hear madame say as the head is withdrawn, "All right, meet me at the Dead Rat," with all the airs of a cocotte who has made a rendezvous.

The following evening Judith is confined to her room by a sick headache, but madame, whose vitality is such that a few hours' rest will compensate and restore outraged nature, is as brisk and ready as ever for movement and amusement. She says, aggrievedly, that, "Of course she will remain at home, it would be such a pleasure to bathe Judith's head, and make mustard paste for the back of her neck; but Judith, who knows that madame is secretly longing to go out with her nephew, declines her well-intended but rather bungling efforts at nursing. She declares to madame that it was only a nervous attack, brought about by too much excitement, and that she will improve much faster if left quite alone for a few hours. Whereupon, madame, with such tender condolence as

befits the occasion, makes haste to go off with her nephew, who calls at the door about eight o'clock. He joins madame in her final expressions of sympathy, and they go forth together like Sancho at the heels of Don Quixote in search of adventure.

For some time Judith lay quite still, struggling not to think, as each thought seemed like a little uncoiled piston in her brain, creaking and beating against sore tissues. Finally she fell asleep, and was dreaming of a charming villa shaded by cool lemon trees, in that fair Florence whither her hero had departed, when she was suddenly aroused by Lenartson and madame entering the room, talking confusedly together and betraying the greatest excitement. It became evident to Judith's startled ears that madame was weeping, while Lenartson appeared to be engaged in a fruitless effort to calm and console her.

The only sound that was clearly audible was madame's spasmodic ejaculations rolling out in a pure dramatic soprano, "Oh, the place was pulled! the place was pulled!"

Lenartson appeared not in the least disconcerted by this terrifying statement, but doubling himself together like the sudden spring of a jack-knife, burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter.

"But what is the trouble, for Heaven's sake?" cried the distressed girl from the bed. Upon this they both united their voices in an effort to explain, producing such a jumble of English and French that they naturally confused matters more than ever. Each discovered some alarming discrepancy in the other's statement, and they began unitedly to accuse each other of distending or warping the truth to meet his or her particular fancy. After a while, madame, overcome by excitement and useless expostulation, subsided by throwing herself into a chair, still tearful and pouting, while Lenartson, master of the situation began to

apologize for his late intrusion and his noisy disturbance, after which he proceeded to give a detailed account of the evening's performance with his aunt in an anarchist den.

"I must confess to yielding to Olivia's importunities to take her across the Seine into a rather objectionable quarter of the city. She insisted that I had promised to do Paris thoroughly, and to be done thoroughly was to know at once wise Paris, beautiful Paris, God-like Paris, if there was any such a thing, and black wicked Paris. She preferred to go to the bottom and so work up through the four stratas of society, and to the bottom she urged me to-night with a vengeance. Into an underground chamber or cellar which attracted her attention I was hurried. It was devoted to the entertainment and instruction of the lower class of poor working men. Into this place Olivia ——"

"No! no!" protested Madame De Sequeria, "you dragged me, your venerable aunt, you wicked boy, into that fearful place of thieves and assassins."

"Yes, mademoiselle, into this infamous place I was dragged by my precious aunt, where both lives were imperilled to gratify her enlarged organ of curiosity, which she politely calls intelligent investigation. Here were men in rough blouses, and here, it is said, Hugo met with other noted political conspirators prominent in the reign of the third Napoleon. The place was well known to the police.

"An old piano filled the disused fireplace, and down sat madame in the dust regardless of the expense of her gown. Over the piano leaned a man who watched madame's face intently, and an old woman crouched near by.

"'Poor fellow,' smiled madame, complacently, quite as much at ease and as full of confidence as she might have been in St. James Palace.

“ ‘Poor fellow ! they probably never saw a real, live lady in this place before ; now listen, while I entertain them.’ As she spoke, she struck a few notes upon the piano, humming an air from Rusticana ; interrupting herself with another seraphic and beaming glance into my face, she declared :

“ ‘How noble and romantic ! it will sound lovely in print next season, you must write it up in your cleverest style, you know, for the American papers.’ ”

“Judith ! oh ! but it was a gruesome place !” interrupted madame from her side of the room. “A miserable hole like a tomb, with walls and ceiling of chalky whiteness, with secret passages closed by iron doors leading to no one knows where. There were low, stooped arches, under which three men suddenly appeared, and one of them, pausing to fix an intelligent and awful eye upon Lenartson, pulled forth a book, where he stood a moment staring at us jointly and writing like the recording angel.”

“Miss Kent,” interrupted Lenartson, “my dear Olivia now commenced to look upon the scene as something less enchanting than St. James Palace. She dropped her hands upon the piano and coolly desired me to assume control of the place by ordering these men to retire just a step before her meditated departure. Madame discovered that the air was vile, and she pined for a change of atmosphere, but she insisted that I should instruct these formidable men to pass out a little before her, like an advance guard to a column of soldiers. I was under the painful necessity of informing her that we were under arrest, and should in all probability be sent to Siberia. As the officers advanced upon us, she grew pale, and trembled so violently I was obliged to support her, while endeavoring to reply to her questions. Some freak had taken possession of my dear Olivia, who thought to be dumb was a safe method, and I,

recommending her good sense, agreed to this by saying, that 'madame is dumb, she cannot speak,' whereupon with that unaccountable perversity of the sex, she burst forth in perfect English :

" 'Oh, Mister, please do not send me to Siberia, and I won't do it again, I won't do it again.' "

" 'But we have not done anything,' I denied.

" 'Oh, I know we haven't,' moans madame, 'but we won't do it again. Oh ! poor Aunt Rosie up in White Plains with her bible on her knee ! what would she say if she saw me now ! I really haven't done anything ; I only sang an air from Rusticana,' and then madame clutched the old woman's hand for protection.

"The old woman commenced to scribble some hieroglyphics upon a dirty piece of paper that she thrust into my hand.

"Madame protests that she was 'only singing an air from Rusticana,' at which the officers cannot repress a smile ; then I explained in a manner that was sufficiently satisfactory to the officers to take their departure, while Olivia and I made our exit, and the old woman cried, '*Vive l'anarchie !*' which caused Olivia to grip me violently."

"I declare," she explains to Judith, "that visions of Siberia, like a continuous season of one night stands was flying through my brain, and I will never, never leave this room for fear of being 'run in.'"

"We talk like a pair of idiots ; do we not, mademoiselle ? I beg your pardon for my rudeness once more, but if I did not help out this statement on the side of truth, I fear Olivia would tell such an extravagant tale as would completely upset you."

"It is high time you went to your own room, sir," commanded his aunt tragically, rising and opening the door for his departure, "you are the most dis-

reputable nephew a respectable woman ever had the charity to acknowledge."

"And you are the dearest auntie in the world," he replied, fondly kissing her cheek as he bade Judith good-night."

"Do come to bed, Olivia, and tell me how much of this story is true. I do believe you have had a dull evening and have gotten up this scene between you and have been shedding 'prop' tears to amuse me."

"I did go into that anarchist den," she avers solemnly. The next day they have a letter from King in which he grows rapturous over Italy, and informs them that Savelli is teaching him one manly art—that he is learning to fence. He closed by saying that he will soon return to Paris for one blessed day, and sends graceful salutations to both ladies at the close of his interesting letter.

It was the evening before Lenartson's departure from Paris that with Judith and madame he sat out upon the balcony. They amused themselves for a while watching the cabs roll by, the lights at first alone being visible and looking like a pair of gigantic fire-flies. Lenartson was sitting upon the balcony rail, nonchalantly sending rings of smoke from his cigarette into the air. Finally, with a look of intelligence passing between madame and her charming nephew, she declared she must go in at once, which she did without further apology.

"Just one moment, I should like to talk with you, mademoiselle," he said, the red and white alternating in his lovely face like the tremulous color on the cheek of a sensitive girl. Judith accepted the seat he placed for her with an uneasy expression in her sweet eyes, raised to his inquiringly.

Judith never confided to Olivia, neither did Lenartson, what transpired during that interview, but the next day he returned to Trouville.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHAT do you suppose, Judith !” cried Madame De Sequeria, coming into the room where Judith sat quietly sipping her chocolate, and looking sweet and cool in her pretty blue organdie, while madame was and excited.

“What do I think?” interrogated Judith, as she laughingly lay an open book face downward on her hot knee.

“Yes, what do you suppose ! I find someone has imitated my bonnet ! The detestable thing ! I will never put my face beneath it again.” With which she flung the unoffending chapeau upon the floor, sending her gloves and parasol shooting after it, like missiles of death poured down from a blazing fort upon the humiliated enemy. “And what is worse, Baroness Pomp is in town, and has actually recognized me and followed me into a café.”

“Well ! well !” began Judith, rousing up at this announcement, as she recognized the name of a beautiful New York actress who had been doing the adventuress trick for two or three years.

“I do hope you had the discretion, Olivia, not to give her our present address ; it would be so tormenting and disagreeable, you know.”

“‘Tormenting and disagreeable !’” growled Madame De Sequeria, prancing up and down the room in a fury. “Don’t I know about it ? She has got twenty dollars of my money in her pocket at this very moment.”

“Why, how foolish, Olivia ! What on earth made you do it ; it will prove of no particular benefit to her, and will make you appear so soft and available that

she will hunt you out and fasten herself upon you like a leech."

"Don't preach to me, Judith! your hard-headed young wisdom sounds far-fetched and hypocritical, my dear. What in the world would you do if you were literally nailed to the spot by the piteous tears and story of a starving woman? Would you give her some money or would you let her starve, I should like to know? Come! come! you preach better things to me upon occasion, yet, when the practical application corners you, you are not up to the mark in the practice of your theoretical virtue, I see."

"Oh, well!" responded the girl, picking up her book again and fixing her eyes indifferently upon the open page, "It depends greatly whether the object is worthy, and that my gift will not be squandered in some fanciful gewgaw to suit a woman's foolish fancy."

"All I can say is, I had a terrible scene with that pretty little wretch; she made me quite miserable until I gave her that twenty dollars." At this point madame commenced to cry very daintily behind an exquisite lace handkerchief.

"It seems to me, Olivia, if my charity was so very distressing I should not practice it frequently," suggested Judith humorously.

"Why, I could not possibly refuse the creature; she had some sort of a paper which she thrust under my nose to assure me if she did not get the twenty dollars she would actually be arrested and shut up in as many minutes. I could not allow that, you know, as I was acquainted with her when she was as sweet and innocent as you are, Judith—in fact, I never did find her really guilty; she is only foolish, you know, and is it a crime, I would like to know, to be born soft and foolish like Baroness Pomp?"

"No, never wicked, but always foolish!" smiled

Judith as she continued to read ; adding immediately, "By the way, did you look at the paper, Olivia?"

"Read it? no, indeed! I had no glasses and the writing was sufficient to declare its character. It was not necessary to read it; one look satisfied me that Madame Pomp could never have written such a devil fist; poor child!"

"Oh, Olivia dear! have you any stationery? I want to write some letters this very afternoon."

"There! I had forgotten I had reached the bottom of the box; *ma chère*, do put on your hat and run down to the stationers."

Pleased to have changed the subject of Olivia's painful cogitations, Judith laughingly picked up her friend's discarded chapeau, setting it jauntily upon her own pretty, wavy hair.

"Charming!" complimented madame.

"It looks so well on you, my love, I will, after all, prove myself heroic enough to disregard the twin. I do not like people to go masquerading in my clothes, but you are so sweet, and it is such a dainty, well behaved little head, I shall allow you to wear it."

Judith put a hasty injunction upon madame's lips by pressing her own against them; after which she hurried from the room, with her pocket-book in her hand. She was tripping lightly down the stairs, when suddenly she became aware that John King had entered at the door of the lower hall and was advancing toward her. In joyous surprise she paused upon the lower stair, standing as he had first seen her, with her face so full of light, her great pathetic eyes shining, and the glad rose red upon her lip and cheek. In trembling haste to meet the warm clasp of the down-stretched hand, he laid his hat upon the table, eagerly crossing the space between them. As he placed his foot upon the stair she lay her hand almost lovingly upon his broad shoulders. With gentle, long-

ing tenderness, he placed his soft warm palms against each side of her face. "My love, 'Thou art like unto a flower,' " he said, as he drew her down, kissing her as a brother might have done upon the smooth, white forehead. In her impulsive and girlish delight, which she could never quite suppress to the becoming dignity of young ladyish reserve, she took his arm, hurrying him up the stairs to madame's cordial welcome. She chatted earnestly, and asked so many questions which required so much time for him to answer in his grave, deliberate way, that they lingered a little outside the door.

"Bless me !" commented madame, perking up her ears, "that sounds like Judith and a man out there." With which Madame De Sequeria opened the door and beheld them like a couple of foolish lovers. This surprising circumstance did not add greatly to madame's sense of propriety and the warmth of her reception of her unexpected guest.

"Oh !" she exclaimed doubtfully, then remembering to be civil she extended her hand as she invited the manager to enter the room.

"Oh, I am going to the Louvre with him, madame, this very afternoon !" cried Judith, recklessly avoiding madame's reproachful and indignant glances.

"Well then !" she replied stiffly, "I shall not trundle forth again to-day. I am completely upset, and just dead tired." Turning sweetly toward Mr. King she resumed, "Perhaps Mr. King can tell us the news at home just as well. How did you like Italy, Mr. King. Are Savelli and Florence Winter married yet ?" This stab intended to bring Judith to her senses failed for once to produce the desired effect. The girl seemed to have taken leave of them altogether, and appeared utterly oblivious that madame had elected herself to be responsible for her proper behavior, and that she had told her upon one

occasion John King was not a man to be trusted, and so had been decided to be no proper companion for her. Despite all these previous warnings and the chill of disapproval in madame's manner, the preparation for departure went on steadily before her indignant eyes.

"Won't you go, Olivia dear? You shall ride to the very door."

"Yes, do, it would give me much pleasure, Madame De Sequeria," solicited King, in a not over anxious tone. But madame, hoping until the last to impose herself as a check to Judith's intention, steadily declined their invitation, and found innumerable excuses why Judith should remain at home with her. She discovered that her bunions were particularly fussy, and that her head ached terribly, and that her poor stomach was afflicted with nausea, but despite her numerous complaints the unsympathetic pair apologizing profusely for their cruelty went away together, wearing exceedingly happy faces, which was a sore cut to madame's vanity and love of empire.

"I really feel that it is wrong to leave poor Olivia so unhappy," declared Judith as soon as they were outside the door. King shrugged his shoulders indifferently. "Olivia must be first, and you, my dear Miss Kent, are too much ruled by her caprice."

"Still I am always uncomfortable when I have made persons I am fond of unhappy; she thought I should not have come out this afternoon."

"Don't be foolish. Why should you always pay tribute to Madame De Sequeria's notions of propriety. I notice on occasions you can manage to conduct yourself very well without interference, but directly she appears you go into bondage to her opinion, becoming a sort of humble vassal to fill out her ampler life."

"I am not endowed with a spirit of such meek suf-

ference as you imagine, Mr. King," replied Judith with some show of spirit. "But it is so much easier yielding than contending, and I always do love to oblige my friends."

They had reached the street by this time, and as he hailed a voiture, assisting her to enter it, he kept his eyes fixed upon her face with a curious smile upon his own.

"Then why not find some pleasure for once in obliging me, Judith. You are old enough to assume the responsibility of your own life, you are no longer a child, you are a woman. I am a man who knows very well what he is about, why should we not be here together if we choose?"

"Why?" she laughed a little recklessly, and changed the subject.

"Dear! delightful! incorrigible girl! allow me to repeat that question, Why?"

"Oh! I cannot tell," she replied very earnestly, at the same time avoiding the tender inquiry of his face. "Only that I am unaccountable to myself. It is because I am the offspring of two widely different natures, I suppose. The warm Italian blood on one side, and the cool Northern brain full of policy and conceit to balance it. It makes me at different times, first calculating, then impulsive; first attracting, then repelling, accordingly as my father and mother's spirit may alternately be manifested."

He leaned back in the carriage looking at her critically. She was wearing a grey cloth gown, and a little bonnet to match, that was adorned by two heavy, white ostrich plumes dropping over the side of her bright, wavy hair. The slender oval face, so delicately tinted rose red and lily white, was a study of sharply chiseled lines and softly moulded curves, dimpling at the chin and corners of the red fruity lips. All the suggestion of her sensitive features seemed to

find expression in her large beautifully shaped, heavily lashed grey eyes, which this morning seemed filled, in their dreamy light, with the suggestion of a tragic history. They were pathetic, appealing, and far reaching in their sight, as she sat thus turning them steadily from the face of her lover out on the gay Parisian world. Her eyes were certainly Italian, not in their color, but in their character. Some of her race had borne their children through a period of disaster, which had left its hereditary mark in their wonderful expression. As he sat regarding her thus, he took into account, with his cool, managing business head, all the soft uncertainties of her warm capricious nature, while his heart beat anxiously in his bosom. She was not to be won like other women. She was fastidious in her impressions, and would revolt at a fancied strain upon the side of custom, the Northern frost and pride tempering and controlling as it did the Southern fire in her blood. This was betrayed in the proud carriage of her head, and the scornful curve of her ripe lips. Her imagination kept her ideals upon such lofty pedestals, they were inaccessible through their direct avenues. There was but one way, he determined, to reach her heart, so closely incased in the warp of her impracticable dreams ; that, to tear away the whole false fabric by a touch of brutality, which would recall nature to her natural empire, and reveal the woman to herself. They both remained preoccupied and thoughtful until they arrived at the great walled court of the Louvre, when Judith came out of her dream with a burst of childish enthusiasm.

"Let's stay out a long time," she suggested, "and visit all the places I have not seen. We will make it a season to be remembered ; a red letter day in Paris."

"Judith, you are good to me, dear." She put out her white gloved hands as a sort of ratification of the

treaty between them ; he held them closely pressed in his own for a moment ; the sudden white hunger of his face, which usually begat in her an attitude of reserve toward him, she did not at this time attempt to repel. But he had cause to know her too well to abuse his privileges.

"Where shall it be ?"

"Anywhere, anything you desire !" he responded, as he gently dropped her hand from the clasp of his tremulous fingers.

"Thank you !" she responded. "I feel as if I should never have another day in all my life just like this one, and I propose to enjoy it fully. First to Cluney, where there is a wonderful chest whose secrets are untold, as no man can undo the lock. Then to Saint Chapelle, where that monstrous treaty was signed which cost the French nation Alsace. Oh no ! I have forgotten : I do get history mixed sometimes ! that was at Versailles in the Galerie des Glaces. I have been to Notre Dame and St. Germaine ; charming St. Germaine ! I have seen the Arc de Triomphe, and Bruants, La Rat Mort, and to Versailles, where I have gazed upon the greater and lesser Trianon, and have considered with becoming solemnity the lessons of the hour where history suggests *Omnia vanitas vanitas vanitatum*.

"Judith !" interrupted King after instructing the *coucher* to drive to Cluney. "Why are you struggling to conceal the little concession you would make so flattering to my masculine vanity by all this irrelevant talk ?"

She attempted to appear unconcerned, but succeeded only in looking very guilty.

"Oh !" she responded more gravely, "I am trying to forget just for this one, dear, delightful afternoon, that I am twenty—well never, mind how many twentys I really am ; I never intend to grow any older, until

I am married or dead. She looked at him, laughing softly with her beautiful eyes aglow and her face flushed with becoming color. "You are not to hold me strictly accountable whatever I may do or say this one day. I simply wish to forget and be happy."

"Forget what?"

"That Alessandro Savelli will probably marry Florence Winter." Although this speech was so delivered as to leave some doubt in his mind, it succeeded in arresting his ardent attention by filling him with angry mortification. He drew himself up stiffly.

"Oh ! I am regarded not so much for myself, but as a valuable envoy from Italy." With this speech, he turned his frowning glance away from her, fixing it upon the Seine, which they were crossing at this moment. She leaned quickly forward with tears in her lovely gray eyes, looking up into his face so piteously between her black lashes, "After all," she complained, "you are going to slip under an ice cover, and so spoil my day." He did not reply, and she from her corner of the luxurious, open carriage, began to bestow a little attention upon the glorious view presented to them of this flashing and splendid Athens of the modern world. The Seine, a sparkle in the sun, over which the pleasure boats swept along between the continuous line of bridges to and from St. Cloud. The city, as a glowing epitome of the French nation, from whose scintillating centre all French life seemed to radiate, rose grandly to the Acropolis upon which was pillared the majestic dome of the Parthenon. Her mind so easily engaged by any touch on its sensibilities that appealed to her imagination, soon became absorbed in these varied scenes of beauty surrounding them. King had no wish to be disagreeable to her, and, after the first sharp pang of disappointment, he came out of his

cloud and beamed upon her with renewed warmth and attention. He resolved to follow her suggestion, and make it a day which she should remember. They reached Cluney about one o'clock, its gray courtyard walls, turreted and covered with ivy, its mullioned windows, gables and square towers looming grandly above the thick foliage of the tree adorning the inner courts.

"Do you know the history of this place, Miss Kent?" King asked, and it was remarkable that he never allowed the familiar name of Judith to pass his lips, only upon such occasions as she seemed to approach him with some insensible desire expressed for familiar terms of acquaintance.

"Well, in a general way, that it was the place of some old Roman heathen some two hundred years before the Christian era."

"If you will give me the pleasure of your attention I will officiate as a book of details."

"I shall esteem it a privilege to be able to draw upon your valuable stock of information. It is so much pleasanter than an incomprehensible Frenchman and an unreadable book."

"Don't you read French?"

"Yes, but like a great many other people who read it, I find myself unable to speak it intelligibly."

"Then I will tell you what I have learned in the way of tradition about this place. First came a luxurious Roman to establish himself in all the transported pagan splendor of the immortal city. Time and the barbaric shock of wars displaced him; two hundred years later the old place that had sheltered as many deities as there were powers and passions to represent them, buried as many tragedies as there were women to beget them, this old place, desecrated by war, wine and wassail became a monastery for chanting monks who supplanted this pagan barbarism

and corruption. Cluney is rebuilt and dedicated to God."

In the centre of the wall was a ponderous iron door, which made Cluney seem like a prison. To the right of this they entered through a small, arched doorway which stood invitingly open, and from the outer court they proceeded to the inner square, where they stopped before a winding, stone stairway leading to the chapel.

"Let us go into the museum by this quaint entrance," suggested Judith, who was obliged to follow King on account of the incommodious width of the stairs. Half way up a little balcony jutted out, into which they stepped and stood for a moment, side by side, looking thoughtfully down upon the gravel walks and smooth pavements shaded by beautiful trees, whose tender foliage revealed upon the surface of every outer leaf the polishing radiance of the sun.

"A pretty study of burnished green and gold!" remarked Judith. "But we have little time to linger, I suppose?"

"As you choose, my lady! I am at your service," he responded gallantly, as he followed her into the chapel. To her surprise, as soon as he had entered the impressive little room, he evinced a great distaste for it and a wish to leave her alone.

"Why are you so averse to the chapel?" she inquired innocently. "Have you never any religious sentiments to disturb the hard surface of your worldly thoughts?"

"I cannot bear a church nor the sound of church music. Let us go on to the Museum, or if you wish to stop and speculate here upon the disappointments and sorrows which sent these old monks to the cloister walls—the sins of their wives, their sisters, or their pretty sweethearts—the crumbling of the crown

which compelled them to the cross—the worship of God, because of their hatred of woman—”

“Oh ! oh !” cried Judith with horror, “do come away at once ; how bitter you are ! and how strange. I do not want my sweet ideals of this glorious self-sacrifice spoiled by your cynical speculation about them. I am sure woman had nothing to do with it. They were holy men God sent and inspired to give the world a new religion—”

“God knows !” he interrupted sharply, as they left the chapel together, “the world was rotten enough to require renovation.”

Thus they chattered and speculated for a couple of hours, when they re-entered the voiture, and were driven to St. Chappelle. Here again King betrayed such strange and cynical aversion to the church as to ungallantly declare that if Judith wished to enter it she should go alone.

“Why won’t you look at the most wonderful stained glass in the world ?” But without responding to her little banter he replied moodily, “No, I will not.” She laid her hand imploringly upon his arm as she looked into his face with an expression of displeasure.

“It is so dreadfully uncanny !” she complained. “Like Faust in league with the devil ! It is as though you could not go, because of some fearful promise made to infernal powers, or some dreadful sin committed.”

“I cannot help what it is like,” he replied, half angrily, “I am nauseated by the sight of a church, the odor of ascension lilies, the sound of church music, or a woman’s voice in prayer.” With this statement he stepped back upon the walk.

“That allusion to Faust is very well illustrated,” he thought with ironical bitterness, as he watched the slim figure of the girl vanishing in the dim portal of

the chapel. "I wonder if she will pray for me ! I hope not. I hate praying women ! Paul was just in his condemnation. They should keep silence before God. The old monks were right in fleeing them and the devil, whose instruments they chiefly make themselves for the ruin of men." The tender pleading face of his mother seemed to rise before him to give the lie to this vile black blasphemy of her sex. But the better impressions created in his thought by the memory of his mother were at once supplanted by a portrait of his cousin Alice's haughty and beautiful face. Thrusting his hands into his pockets he began to pace the walk restlessly back and forth before the steps of the chapel, as his mind was stirred by unwelcome recollection of the old refrain, "*We have erred and strayed from thy ways.*" Had he strayed? Very far from the first lofty ideas of life, it was true ; but he chose to charge the whole responsibility of his own wretched rebellion against God to an inexplicable destiny wrought out for him by the delicate hands of an idol-breaking woman. Had she been true, he could never have been false ; or he might have been what he then dreamed he should become, and not that which he now was. She, the human thing, had made the link betwixt his soul and deity ; no ! had she even been human in her weakness, still the tie would have bound his passion in venerating subordination to a higher claim ; but she had descended below humanity, she had utterly destroyed his faith in the truth of woman and the power of religion to rule into quiet the monstrous passions of our natures. If she did not embody the virtues she assumed, who could be trusted ? who was really true ? Mentally, ideally, physically, she was the rarest embodiment of a man's dream of a noble Christian woman, and she had been false ; as false as Hell !"

At this point Judith called him from the steps ; he

looked up nervously to observe the girl standing in the door of the chapel with a smile upon her sweet lips, and a glint of the golden sunshine upon her hair. "And this woman? How far would she stand the test?" So his cynical doubt ended for a time, as with a great throb of healthful feeling responding to the influence of her faith-inspiring presence, he advanced to conduct her to the voiture.

"What have you been doing in there so long?" he inquired curiously. She met his eyes very seriously.

"I have been praying for you."

"God forbid!" he exclaimed in evident disgust. "I would rather that you swore at me, Judith. Brutality is to be preferred to hypocrisy." He assisted her into the voiture where she sat without particularly regarding him, looking about her with a face expressive of indolent pleasure.

"What was your prayer?" he inquired, after a moment of silence.

"That you might recover one day your lost faith." He tried to frown and look displeased, but it was evident he was considerably interested.

"How do you know I have lost faith, Judith?"

"You impress me as a man—" she looks at him a moment, full of uncertainty, then finished boldly, "who has thrown all the strength of his heart and soul upon some human support—" again she paused to deliberate.

"And what?" he interrogated, eager to listen to her definition of his case.

"Found it insecure," she concluded briefly. "I have not said to you just what I wished—in a way, you always appeal strongly to my sympathies."

"I do not require your pity," he replied coldly; thus the subject of her secret impression was abandoned.

Both being determined to make the most of the

day despite these cloudy incidents, were soon re-engaged in less personal and more happy themes of conversation. They spent the remainder of the afternoon in the Louvre. When they got tired of looking at famous frescos and paintings, they found a comfortable corner in one of the wide window seats where they sat talking together, and watching the miniature painters at their work. Finally the clouds commenced to gather, and soon a misty rain veiled the outer landscape. That afternoon at the Louvre somehow brought them into closer companionship than they had ever known before ; it was like a delightful dream to them both. King had never appeared or looked more elegant and handsome than he did this August afternoon sitting opposite to her in the Louvre window in his immaculate linen and dustless black cloth ; the stir of passionate life within him expressing itself to her in the mellow modulation of his voice, the strong flash of his eye, and the warm flush of excitement burning upon his cheeks. She seemed to accept his adoration with an air of grace and luxury in her negligent pose against the dark wood, framed upon one side by the gray outer light, and touched into romantic beauty by the pictured stories of the dead ages, and further accentuated by the ambitions of modern life symbolized in the painters about them eagerly engaged at their work. They went home together only when the hour arrived to close the building. John King did not linger to listen to madame's complaint, but bidding her a hasty farewell, he took both Judith's hands in his own, while he stood for some moments looking at her long and earnestly. "You have been very sweet to me this one afternoon," he said, "I shall never, never forget it, "and despite Madame De Sequeria's disdainful disapproval, he bent forward to leave a farewell kiss upon the little white spot on her fore-

head where the parting of her hair left it temptingly exposed.

"We shall meet again in America soon, until then, good-by, sweet girl," he said, and was gone.

CHAPTER XX.

It happened that a vacancy led John King to offer Madame De Sequeria a position in the Savelli company during the following season. This was very gratifying to Judith, and perfectly delightful to Madame De Sequeria. By this manœuvre John King had, in a way, purchased the place by making madame his subject. If he was suspicious of her influence over Judith's mind, he made himself by this action so important to the material interest of his diplomatic friend, as to render her nearly helpless in matters inimical to his dearest interests. Florence Winter had slipped quietly out of their lives. Whatever happened between her and Savelli while in Florence, was never known; but they were estranged, and there was talk of her engagement to a New York millionaire. Her name ceased to be mentioned among them after the first curious speculations of madame and Judith were exhausted. Certainly Savelli did not act the love-lorn swain, but rather like a person relieved of an unwelcome burden. Never had the genius of the young star so impressed the world before. He had reached the zenith of a rare manhood, rich in those qualities that win the applause and admiration of men. Everything moved without friction until the last of the season, when a very costly New York production was arranged between the star and his man-

ager. Romeo and Juliet was billed for New York with a promise of the most magnificent costumes and settings ; but who should play Juliet ?”

“Why, King !” responded Savelli to King, who asked this question, “I supposed that you would be the first to suggest Miss Kent.”

“Miss Kent ? Judith ?” inquired John King staring at him in surprise, “Oh, no, Sandro ; the stakes are too heavy. Without saying anything disparaging of Miss Kent as a sweet girl, her powers as an actress are not always well sustained ; for instance, she has never done any such work this season as she did last year at Denver and San Francisco. I am afraid to trust her with Juliet in such an expensive production ; business is business, Sandro, you know.”

“Yes ; but I have promised Miss Kent without suspecting your disapproval, and I must not break my word with her,” insisted Savelli firmly.

“Thunder and lightning !” exclaimed John King, springing to his feet in great irritation, as he began to pace the floor. “What sort of a position is this to be placed in ? I never yet knew a man of genius who had a particle of method, or head for business. Why could you not have allowed the matter to rest until we had talked it over together ?” Savelli also rose haughty and indignant ; he was not accustomed to rebuke, and did not take kindly to such a tone of command as King, in his hasty anger, now unconsciously assumed while speaking to him.

“King ! I cannot allow you to dictate to me in this manner.”

“Sandro, be reasonable, can’t you ?” expostulated King, seeing his mistake and coming around to stand before him with an air of concession.

“I should recommend the consideration of that course to you, sir,” responded the aroused actor with

spirit, as he declined further conversation upon the matter, by proudly leaving the room.

"Well!" mused King in a most uncomfortable frame of mind, as he resumed his seat to smoke and think; "this promises to be a confounded unpleasant affair. It is quite plain to me that the critical test is to be applied when I must choose betwixt my heart and my fortune. Alessandro Savelli, either by good-natured blundering or cunning artifice has the winning card in his hand. Would she love or respect me for ruining myself to suit her sweet vanity, I wonder? Pah! no, I must keep my position as a man before the world. Women love to be ruled; they never show their pretty wings in cloudy weather, but come out like butterflies to look at the sun. The subject had better be dropped for the present, for Alessandro Savelli is as obstinate as a mule in all matters pertaining to his notions of honor. Because he has promised that charming little witch, why, of course, he feels bound to stand by his word. Well, he shall never give her an opportunity to make herself so great as to be perfectly independent of me, if I can possibly help it. That would never do; and if favors are to be presented on silver salvers, my hand, not Savelli's, must hold the tray."

John King's mind at this point was led to consider the possibility of pitting Eileen Kendall against the Savelli company, in case of a quarrel. She had been making an American tour this season with great success.

"What could be done?" he wondered; "what was the measure of his influence with her? Did a woman ever quite forget the first love of her life?" If the devil first put the thought into his head, he followed its announcement by informing John King of the sudden death of J. B. Tyler, manager of Eileen Kendall. "Died in his office at nine o'clock this morn-

ing." So the New York paper read which King held in his hand. It looked like an opportunity unexpectedly presented to him in his effort to checkmate Savelli, if the move became necessary. The thought of his former relations with this woman did not deter him in the pursuit of his project. It was a matter of business. He thought of Eileen Kendall only as the successful actress, and he could but concede that she was a wonderful woman in her profession. Not a heart throb of compunction stirred his bosom in response to the old love, as he entered the telegraph office to communicate with her. The old life seemed like a dream. It was the actress alone he contemplated as a fortunate speculation. He sent the following telegram :

"EILEEN KENDALL : Will you consent to an interview?
(Signed) JOHN KING."

The reply came flying back over the wires.

"JOHN KING : Tuesday at two o'clock.
"(Signed) EILEEN KENDALL."

Tuesday was a day of agonized suspense to only one mind. The woman suffered as woman must to the end of the chapter ; but the man, who could ruthlessly bring shame and reproach into her life yet keep himself free from the touch of either, walked nonchalantly up — street, rang the bell, was ushered into the elegant reception room of the actress's New York residence, and, without the quiver of a muscle to disturb his perfect composure, found himself bowing and making polite speeches to his former victim. With a graceful yet critical attention he fixed his sharp glance upon the cold, commanding, statuesque figure of the woman before him. The dead white of

her gown, heavily trimmed about the throat and sleeves with fur, served to conceal somewhat the sudden and ghastly pallor which overspread her features. For a moment she stood, pale, inwardly trembling and silent before him, but with an air of outward calm that betrayed to his inquiring gaze an attitude of studied grace and freezing intellectual repose. He had some secret conviction that she might be woman enough to make an embarrassing allusion to the past between them, it was now disagreeable for him to remember ; but her first words assured him that he had to deal with a hardened character, entirely different from the cowering and desperate girl he had trifled with and thrown out on the world two years before.

"What can I do for you, Mr. King?" she inquired in an icy tone. This reception from a woman who had evidently grown worldly with success, seemed such an assurance to him that she would never require him or desire him to resume the old footing with her, that he replied without his usual diplomatic caution.

"I learned by the papers of yesterday that you are likely to be embarrassed by the death of your manager, poor Tyler ! I knew him quite well ; an excellent fellow, and a shrewd business man. I regret his untimely end, as no doubt you must very greatly."

"I do," she answered briefly, sitting down, and indicating by a wave of her white, jeweled hand, a wish that he should be seated at her side.

"I do not suppose, however, you come here, Mr. King, to simply offer speeches of condolence." She smiled.

"Hardly ! There is a point at issue between myself and Mr. Savelli which may end in a dissolved partnership. In case we should quarrel hopelessly, would it contribute anything to your convenience and material welfare, Miss Kendall, if I should propose to

place myself at your service for your management during the remainder of the season. He had come to the point with his usual clean, business despatch. She sat for a moment silently appearing to consider his proposition, but really struggling to frame a reply which should not betray the trembling eagerness of her heart, as she concealed her eyes by keeping her gaze fixed upon her hands, lying loosely clasped in her lap. When at last she looked back at him, there was a little straight line of critical determination sharply drawn together between her brows.

"It is hardly complimentary to me, Mr. King, to make me the accidental dependent upon some doubtful condition of your life ; when you and Mr. Savelli have finished your quarrel I should think it would be better for you to come to me then with this offer for my management." At this point of the interview, she rose with a haughty air of an empress, thus signifying that it was at an end. John King was somewhat phased by the turn of affairs between them. This woman did not look unlike the soft, weeping child who had once implored him to "Step upon her, crush her ! anything, for God's sake ! except to leave her." If he had ever had any doubts of the inconstancy of the feminine heart, this circumstance settled his cynical belief in their superficial and uncertain affections.

Concealing the chagrin with which this speech filled him, he rose from her side, where he stood for a moment looking upon her with his strong, contemplative eyes.

"I see," he said, "you will secure another manager during the coming week, and I am to take this decision as your final answer. You see upon such conditions as these, I cannot very well afford to quarrel with Mr. Savelli, even if I wish to do so."

It she really had any soft vanities lingering in her

memory, or shrewd calculation of his importance to her interest, this, he concluded, would force a more open avowal of them. She knew him well enough to judge it was safe to take him at his word in these matters.

"I will take my hat, if you please," he continued in his graceful, nonchalant way. "I would like to say that I am pleased with your success; indeed, it is a cause of great rejoicing to me, that my judgment of your powers as an actress two years ago have been so thoroughly disproved, and that the half developed girl has had the courage to do her work so well, that to-day I meet in her a proud, self-sustained and beautiful woman." She turned first away, then toward him with nervous haste, as a rush of becoming color flooded her face, which betrayed her emotions, despite her effort to repress them.

"Let the past remain as it is, if you please, Mr. King, a closed chapter. We are as two strangers to-day." She longed to hear some passionate protest against this decision, but instead, he signified his cool consent, by raising his eyebrows and bowing his head. The servant now opened the door, carrying his hat and his overcoat.

"Good morning," was his abrupt farewell, and the door closed between them. No sooner was the actress alone than the emotional side of her nature burst through her assumed coldness. She paced the floor like a caged tigress, weeping and wringing her hands.

"He is so masterful, and cold! so cruel to me! he always was so! I should hate him! I would rule or ruin him! I thought I might; for this I have studied and worked and schemed, day and night; for this I have kept my heart fed upon the husks of other men's flattery and passions, that in the end I might win him by first winning the world. I thought he would come to me soft and repentant; instead, he is the same

cruel, masterful man that he ever was ; and I am still a woman, despised for my weakness."

At this point the bell rang and a servant entered to present a card. Eileen stretched forth her hand to receive it, at the same time shading her wet eyes with her handkerchief. She read upon the satin finished slip of paper the name of her last fancy, the Baron Van Rubenstein, who had followed her to this country.

"Admit him," and the servant retired to usher in her guest. "Fool that I am ! to prefer a home in New York to a palace in Berlin."

It happened as John King anticipated, neither man being willing to yield the point of contest, they quarrel and separate. John King is not accustomed to submit his will and judgment to another's vindication, and he has more than an ordinary motive in not allowing Savelli to force him into a secondary position in the present issue between them. Savelli has assumed the entire control of the affairs of the company. King coolly calculates the ruin of the whole project, as he has but little confidence in the young actor's financial ability. In the end, Judith will be humiliated by failure, and in the meantime he can afford to wait. At the close of affairs between Savelli and himself, he sends up his card requesting an interview with Judith and Madame De Sequeria, which is granted, of course. Accordingly about half past eleven, King presented himself before them with an open telegram in his hand. He is elegantly dressed as usual, and appears unusually cool and self-possessed. Madame D——, who is fond of King, and in his employ, receives him graciously, calling to Judith, who enters the room from an adjoining apartment. She seems to float before his enraptured gaze like a dream of beauty ; never more tempting than now, when he feels that for a time they must be separated.

He turns with that slow dignity, that is both impressive and becoming, to receive her morning salutation, given with both hands springing forth impulsively to meet the steady, warm clasp of his fingers. The rustle of her silks, the delicate flutter of ribbons, the sweet odor of heliotrope, the smiling, gracious youth of the tender woman ; how could he coolly and deliberately tear himself away from the daily, almost hourly contemplation of her picture, which seemed to have been wrought in him out of the tenderest fibres of his heart. His determined will was scarcely equal to the self-imposed task of bidding her a calm "good-by." He therefore chose to be abrupt.

"I am in a hurry this morning, ladies," he commenced, in a voice slightly constrained in an effort to speak casually, "but I am unhappy to inform you that a disagreement has arisen between myself and Mr. Savelli resulting in our separation. I hold in my hand a telegram requesting me to assume the management of Eileen Kendall." Both ladies betrayed the greatest consternation, and Judith felt all the strength desert her so suddenly she was obliged to sit down in order to shield her weakness from the critical eyes of the man resting upon her. She managed to say very quietly :

"I am so sorry, Mr. King ! I am very much surprised." While King continued steadily, looking rather at her than at Madame De Sequeria :

"To me, of course, it is a matter of the deepest regret that I feel obliged to sever my connection with so many interesting people ; but as I hope to marry some day, it behooves me to consider the interest of that unknown fair lady, and I cannot, warmly as I admire Miss Kent as a woman, allow Savelli more than his rights regarding her position as an actress. Whether my judgment would or not have permitted me to offer Juliet to the fairest and sweetest Juliet

on the continent, is not wholly the question ; I could not permit Mr. Savelli to assume so much more of the business than belonged to him by settling this affair with her without even consulting me about it."

At this point, madame began to shed "prop" tears. "It is a shame !" she averred, "that two such sensible men as you and Savelli are, King, should fall to quarreling about that foolish chit of a girl, Judith !"

"It is unfortunate, certainly," remarked King, "that we cannot agree upon a point of business, and that my decision is likely to give some offence to a lady whose friendship is so important to my happiness." Feeling that he could not longer endure the look in the lovely eyes studying his face, so full of all that which he guessed lay burning and trembling to express itself at the bottom of her impressive and generous heart, King rose immediately to bid the ladies farewell. "If I can do anything at any time in the future for either of you, your place with me, you know, is assured. I must repeat that I am exceedingly sorry to go away." As he felt that he was losing control of his voice, he put out a hand to each of them. He did not fail to calculate the true pain of his departure to them both by the temperature of the pretty hands resting in his. One was warm, but passive, while the other clutched his a little desperately and was cold as ice. Not one moment longer did he dare to linger. "Goodby," he said, in a short, crisp tone as he left the room. No sooner had he done so, than Judith flung herself forward upon the couch, burying her face among the cushions.

"Go away and leave me alone, Olivia," she entreated Madame De Sequeria so piteously, that she thought it was best to do as she was requested.

CHAPTER XXI.

KING proved strangely intractable and taciturn toward his star's advances. This was inexplicable to Eileen, until the Baron Van Rubenstein called one afternoon and made it a point to inform her of King's wild and hopeless passion for Judith Kent.

"And she is playing here in New York?" Eileen asks.

"Yes, at the —— Theatre. I believe that there is a *matinée* this afternoon," is the Baron's response.

"This afternoon?" the woman ponders a moment and says finally, "I wish to go."

To this man her wish was law. Her carriage was ordered while she went to dress.

Seated in the shadow of the box, unobserved by the audience, she waited impatiently for Judith's entrance, drawing a quick sharp breath as she beheld the girl.

"Beautiful ! beautiful !" she remarked to her companion ; "and good ; I can hear in her voice."

At that moment King entered the opposite box ; Eileen Kendall's gaze wandered from Judith to King, and from King back again to Judith. A smile of satisfaction crossed her lips, as she shrewdly calculated : "He is in love, but the girl is indifferent."

She left the theatre early, not caring to be scrutinized by the vast audience. Upon her arrival home King was there before her.

As they seated themselves at the dinner table, she thought how handsome and distinguished John King looked, and that slightly melancholy air really became him.

The elegantly dressed and beautiful woman before him waited upon him with studied grace and an

expression of deliberation making itself apparent in the languid and inquiring glances frequently directed toward her guest.

When two little lines between John King's eyes had grown less deep, she broached the subject that was uppermost in her mind.

"Mr. King, I hear that you are in love. New York has so many pretty scandals afloat just now, I went this afternoon to the theatre to look over the ground of defeat. I took the liberty to watch you both critically. It is no use, King, she is indifferent; your fate is sealed there. Now I mean a fortune to you, do I not?"

"Undoubtedly," is the response.

"And," very quietly, "Judith Kent means nothing."

John King arose in a fury of wrath. "You shall not mention her name; a woman like you!"

His anger acted like a torch to her own; she also was upon her feet in an instant.

"And who made women like me but men like you, John King? you shall repent those words."

Moodily King followed Eileen Kendall and her maid to the carriage. He felt reckless, even, as he realized, too late, that he had allowed his own personal feelings to gain the ascendancy.

It was too early to go the theatre; he turned miserably up the avenue.

"Good Heavens! the ingratitude of a woman. Hadn't Kendall all one could desire? Admiration, money, fame even had crowned her. Perhaps it had been a mistake to renew the old friendship; after all it was only a business arrangement, yet people believed it otherwise. Well, the majority of the world were fools; sulkily he strolled on thinking how broken his life looked to him. If he failed in winning Judith Kent—failed—" his teeth clenched savagely together

as he proceeded on his way. "No, he would not fail! by fair means or—Heavens! what was he coming to? perhaps his brain was not quite clear," he laughed derisively, and turning retraced his steps.

It was the next morning, while Eileen Kendall was sitting quietly meditating before the fire, that a telegram was placed in her hand. It was a cipher message from a Wall Street man, advising her to sell certain stock without delay. Going hastily to her desk she seized a telegraph blank and wrote a message to her broker; hastily snatching another blank she wrote as follows: John King—and then she hesitated. It happened that she had advised King to invest in this same stock and had delegated herself to watch the market for him; now came her opportunity for revenge; every penny which King possessed, at her suggestion had been invested. It was not like King to trust his business to any one, but she had proven herself an unusually sharp speculator, and King was too much abstracted by the affairs of his heart to use his usual caution in watching the rise and fall of his investments. Without a regret Eileen Kendall quietly rang the bell, sending but *one message*, which was answered within forty-five minutes. She takes up the slip upon which she has written "John King," twists it with a cruel smile of scorn, tosses it into the fire and watches it burn to ashes. She had deliberately ruined him.

The sharp contest between himself and Eileen Kendall, recalled King's mind somewhat to the more practical concerns of his life. His suspicions being aroused, he wisely reflected that it was not fully wise to trust his money to a woman so deeply interested in the management of his affairs and unscrupulous as he now believed Eileen Kendall to have become. He hastened to the brokers to repair the mischief only to learn of his financial ruin. He came in upon the

woman who had played him so false, white with anger. Under no circumstances, however, was he a man to lose command of his dignity.

"I learn, madame, that when you hastened to save yourself last Tuesday, you forgot your business honor, so far as to allow that part of the stock held in trust for me, to decline on your hands. I could not, of course, calculate on such base action as would call for hard names between two men. I come to tell you that I will so far gratify your desire for disaster in my life, as to immediately sever my connection with you and your affairs." As it often happens with a person who has stooped to an act of revenge, Eileen Kendall was for a moment overcome by King's bold and haughty denunciation; but recovering herself at the close of this speech, she arose with insolent grace, and laid her hand upon his shoulder as he was about to leave the room.

"You had fair warning last Tuesday, when you so far forgot yourself as to insult me at my own table."

"It was no insult," returned King hotly. "As your action now bears out the truth of my insinuations, you are not a woman who should be permitted to even mention the name of a girl like Judith Kent."

"And are you a man, a betrayer of such a girl, worthy of the love of one of them?" she sneered at him, as she drew up her majestic figure trembling with wrath, her face whitening to her lips. "If you have any fault to find with my life and character you and your philosophy have shaped both. You blasted my happiness and flung me out unprotected among a cold and merciless world of men."

"Not penniless! not penniless!" he said, as he opened and closed the door between them.

CHAPTER XXII.

FOR three days following these scenes, John King laid in bed, his brain on fire with a raging fever ; but his splendid vitality conquered so far, that at the end of this time he was able to get up and go out again.

As he walked alone beneath the stars, amidst the hurrying crowd, he reflected that he had indeed been cruel to one woman ; so cruel ! and she had perhaps justly revenged herself. He did not think bitter thoughts concerning her ; he thoroughly despised her character, and wondered how he could ever have been sufficiently interested to have made her even his mistress. Ah ! if he could escape the convictions, which appeared to trouble other men so little, that he had not led a correct life. The more he thought, the darker the prospect loomed before him, and the more desperate his resolution became to win Judith Kent, or to possess her. At length, like a man driven to frenzy, he rushed into her presence to put the case to a final test. His unhappy situation was such as to make him a marked man. There were various scandals and theories afloat which connected his name unpleasantly with Eileen Kendall. Some of these stories he took the pains to correct. In the meantime he was embittered by the circumstance of his desertion by his old friends. Not one word of sympathy or of condolence reached him in the dark hours of his life. Consequently when Judith opened the door upon her unexpected visitor, she was greatly shocked by his pale and haggard appearance. Although she was strangely pleased to see him, she was yet annoyed that he should presume to call upon her in so familiar a manner, when New York was raking up the old

story regarding his former connection with a notorious actress.

"Mr. King, I will see you in the public parlor," she hastened to say, as she stepped into the hall outside, and they descended the stairs together. For the first time in his life he seemed to have lost his manner of dignity and repose. He talked so wildly for the next ten minutes that, overcome by the sight of him in such a state of mind, she rose hurriedly from her chair, saying somewhat sternly as she did so: "Mr. King, I am so sorry for you, but I cannot listen to you this morning; you are either insane or you have been drinking." With which statement she at once left the room. Her actions served to sober him, so far as to restore his old outward bearing of dignity and render more acute his managing, planning faculty. He stepped into the station to take a train for his country residence at New Rochelle. Ere he embarked, however, he went into the telegraph office, and dictated the following message to Judith.

"Have met with an accident, and am being taken to New Rochelle. Come to me, and come alone. I would like to see you before I die."

"It is damnable work!" he concluded, "but I will have this woman either by fair means or by foul."

When he at length arrived at New Rochelle, he set out on foot to his residence, first posting a letter to Savelli which he had written on the train.

A walk of a mile brought him to his country home, called Maple Terraces, where many times he had entertained the girl he was now planning to betray. Judith had always been fond of this little residence set among the trees, gray gabled and green terraced. She was ever ready, when in New York, to go out to Maple Terraces for a quiet day's frolic with the Company. Once she had said to him in her reckless way,

"If you die before me, Mr. King, will me Maple Terraces, it would make such a nice tea-caddy, when I get old, and cappy and garrulous," and he had replied :

"Before that time, if you should choose to honor me by its acceptance." To-day he vowed between his clenched teeth it should be as he desired. He stopped before the rustic entrance, looking in upon this cool and delightful retreat from the busy world, close from the street by a stone wall over which ran the twisted vine of a wisteria. He opened the gate, hurrying up the smooth, graveled walk, under the shadow of the flowering maples, to his own door. He was admitted by his servant into the house. The place was fitted according to King's exquisite taste throughout ; a little palace, without a woman to make it a home. Never had he felt more lonely than on this day when he seated himself by the big stone fire-place and sat there a crushed figure before the smouldering fire. A voice spoke so suddenly behind him, he startled nervously even to his feet, but it was only the serving woman asking him if he would have dinner at the usual hour. "No, thank you, Hannah ! you may set upon this table a plate of crackers, a bottle of wine, and a box of cigars. He remained standing with his hands clasped behind his back, until the maid returned with the desired articles, borne upon a silver tray which she set upon a mahogany table that occupied the centre of the room.

"Is that all, sir ?" she inquired.

"It is all—no wait a moment ; let me think. Here are seventy-five dollars, it is your last quarter's payment, you have been a good girl, but I have met with misfortune which necessitates a rearrangement of my affairs."

"My God, sir ! but I am sorry if ill has happened to

you ; is there anything I could do ? I would like to stay in your service."

He pressed his hands wearily against his brow. "You can do me an important service, Hannah ; a young lady will come here this afternoon about five o'clock ; if she comes alone admit her to this room ; if she asks if I am ill, tell her that I am very sick indeed, but on your life and my happiness, do not answer another question or betray me ; I simply wish to talk to her alone and uninterrupted. When she has entered the room, lock the door and leave the house until half past eight o'clock. You know that you can trust me to do no wrong."

"Indeed I will ! and I shall not be afraid," consented Hannah, flattered by his insinuating confidence. Having done this, John King delivered the keys of the room into the hands of the waiting woman, remarking as he did so, "I think she will come alone." With this statement he turned his back toward her, walking to the table from which he took a cigar but did not touch the wine. The room was a long narrow, low ceiled apartment like the hall in some old castle. It faced the garden upon one side, and one end of the opposite wall was closed by a door and an alcove. It was furnished with a few paintings in Vandyke tints of exquisite richness and beauty. A cabinet of photographs occupied one corner, among which Judith Kent sat pre-eminent upon a little ivory easel of a most elegant fashion, being inlaid with mosaics and studded across the top bar with pearls. Wide, easy chairs, and rich Persian rugs were gracefully disposed along the centre of the polished floor ; between the curtains of lace which hung before the long low windows were set rare jardinières of potted plants and palms. The disposition of them was so umbrageous as to interfere with the light, affording an appearance of delightful coolness in the hot sum-

mer days. All the remainder of the afternoon John King walked and smoked and, although his brain seemed crying for stimulants and he could not eat, yet he did not drink. His face was so thin and haggard with suffering that it seemed drained of all color and pulled into great hollows under his fine eyes ; eyes that burned and glistened like great lamps of the soul they imprisoned. They were the eyes of a man driven to desperation, who knows he has thrown the rein to the devil to carry him through his purpose, and awaits the issue of his schemes, with that impatience of uncertainty that keeps every restless thought as taut as a sail in a tempest, and every nerve of his body racked with painful emotion.

He did not allow himself one moment of rest until he heard the door close on the entrance below, and the high, sweet treble of Judith's voice inquiring the way. Into the little alcove connected with this room he retired, holding the curtains together with a hand that shook with a tremulous joy agitating his whole body. He heard Judith enter the room, and all the torture of despair vanished with that sound. The place grew suddenly redolent with a delicate aroma of some land enchanted ; the land of a man's passionate dream of life with the woman he loves.

He flung back the curtains, standing within the aperture before the eyes of the deceived and astonished girl, making a motion at the same time to the woman behind her, who softly slipped out of the door closing and locking it as she did so. Hearing the sound of the key turned in the lock, Judith, with a sudden cry of terror, turned and flung herself against the door, wrenching with all her delicate strength at the fastenings, and calling frantically to the woman outside that she had been deceived, and demanding, in the name of all womanly virtue and pity, her liberation.

John King came a short way into the room. "Judith," he commenced with enforced calmness. At the sound of his voice she turned upon him, armed with all the reserve courage of her nature, prepared for the worst that could happen to her.

"What does this mean, John King?" she demanded in contemptuous anger, rebellion written upon every feature, although her trembling form was braced for support against the door.

"Do not look so like a bird caught in the net of the fowler, Miss Kent; I am simply compelling your attention. I wished to speak with you this morning, you know, but you would not listen to me; you made conditions for me then; God knows they were maddening, Judith. Now I have reversed the game, but I intend to be more merciful to you."

She looked at him for a moment in angry silence as he stood before her with his arms folded across his bosom, his heavy head dropped forward until his firm, square chin rested upon his immaculate shirt front, his lips pressed together into hardness of determination beneath the dark shade of his moustache that was curled, waxed and perfumed; his eyes, always compelling, cynical or sad, rolled up to hers with an expression of leonine victory, and aflame with a passion that consumed every holier, nobler instinct of his manhood. Yet there was something in this fallen nature not wholly base, that pulled with tempting force at the heart-strings of the frightened and angry girl. In a radiance that burned like a subdued light shed over his stern face, a silent force spoke for the man to her against reason, saying, you can make me what you will by the power of my great love for you. She spurned the thought as one unworthy her consideration. She was compelled to recognize the fact that in considering himself he was merciless to her;

being a man without honor, she made the best of her condition by seeking to temporize with him.

"How could you? how dared you do such a thing, John King? Are you without heart as well as principle? Have you no conception of the enormity of this thing? Allow me to go away at once and I will see you under proper circumstances at some other place, where I will listen patiently to all you wish to say to me."

Tears came into her eyes, whose pathetic appeal was so beautiful it only served to increase his madness and thus rendered more invincible his purpose concerning her. All the storm of feeling for her which he had been holding in check behind his hard-set lips and tightly folded arms burst forth in a torrent of words and played over the quivering whiteness of his thin, expressive features, like the sudden glare of lightning trembling through a cloud.

"Judith! Judith! Oh, Judith, my dear!" He came very near to her, and upon looking at him she shrank closer against the door in terror. Although he appeared not to notice her trouble, yet he did not attempt to touch her. Struck by a sudden chill of the rising storm, he shook so that his teeth chattered and every muscle and fibre of his strong body yielded to the sharp and sudden strain of the inner tempest.

"Judith! Judith! my dear, I love you! Never but twice in my life have I ever loved any of your sex but my mother. The first was a beautiful woman to look upon, but she was as false as the devil himself. Never but once have I betrayed a woman's confidence, although the world has so many dark whispers to the contrary circulating against me, and if I betrayed her, Judith, she has richly revenged herself; I do not complain that it was not just. I will not tell you that because of my love for you I have thrown every other consideration of life to the wind,

and stand before you to-day at thirty-two, exhausted of every ambition, empty of every other desire, after having seen and tried the world and found it empty ; I come to you, the sweetest, purest woman I have ever known, praying on my knees as I would pray to my God or one of his angels only. Judith ! Judith ! dear little woman ! fill my empty arms, my empty heart, and henceforth I swear I will commence to build myself anew in answer to every desire of your sweet womanhood. You are the one pure planet of my heart that has not set."

Something in the force of this appeal overcame for a moment her calm consideration of the circumstances which surrounded them. As he leaned down to her, trembling with an eagerness to embrace her, yet with manly delicacy restraining himself, she could hear the wild beating of his blood, could feel the warm fragrance of his breath upon her cheek ; her generous, womanly heart stirring within her grew faint with the conflict.

"I would like to believe you," she responded, with an effort at calmness, "but having done what you have done, can you expect me to have any faith in a man so without honor?"

"Pardon me, dear little lady !" he said, without answering the question, as he stepped back to wheel a chair toward her, "I have even forgotten to be civil. Sit down and think quietly for ten minutes if I am wholly to blame in this matter. I will not go away, but I will not interrupt you ; only remember, that for everything with which you have damned me, I have only one cause to plead—I love you, and I would not give a rap for life without you. I believe that I have enough left in me at thirty-two to reward you for giving me your heart." He turned his back upon her with this statement and stood looking out of the window, restlessly consulting from minute to min-

ute the gold watch that he held beneath his eye in the palm of his hand.

Judith felt herself involved in a net of inexplicable circumstances. Between Alessandro and John King her heart had vibrated for two years like a pendulum of a clock. There was something in King that always ruled and dominated her despite herself, but Alessandro ever inspired her with unshaken faith and confidence in his manly virtue. One man had the power to touch the sensuous side of life, which set in tumult all the reckless passions of her nature, the other, seeming to transcend his humanity, led her into the land of sublime ideals. Both men she felt, in a way, to be stronger than herself, with a shaping power to make her destiny. Of the thunderous depths and lightning flashes of King's nature she was ever afraid; but there was in Alessandro an unclouded benignity which shone on like the sun, beyond and above her particular touch, yet ever warming and inspiring to her life. One man she commenced to realize for the first time she had loved with a love that had never brought any response. It had been well understood in theatrical circles, that Alessandro Savelli would marry Florence Winter; why, God only knew! unless it was that he chose such a woman from the very largeness of a nature that sought to protect the weakest thing that had ever clung to it. How different the action of John King with Eileen Kendall. New York was alive with the story to which he had often referred recently with some sort of excuse for himself. How insecure was this man's honor, how contemptible his present action she did not fully know, but the fact that he had enticed her to spend a few hours with him alone and unprotected was sufficient evidence that where his desires were considered he was always weak in principle. It did not occur to her at this moment he

could be so base and cruel as to really compromise her. She supposed this meeting was a secret between them, and that if anything should leak out regarding the interview, he would be in haste to defend her. At first, it is true, she had been appalled, but as she marked with what respect he treated her, she commenced to regain her confidence in him, and to calculate the pace against him in her own defense. She concluded that she could not trust him, and that in the end he would go hellward despite a woman's love or effort to check his course. The very vehemence of his emotions argued ill with her for their continuance. She was too soft and yielding ; he was like a volcano, clothed in snow ; one could never calculate, the moment of the flood and the outburst ; she would not be shielded and protected, she would be pushed and dominated ; she would be burned to a skeleton by that force of ardor, which inspired and moved him on to the accomplishment of all his purposes, and then she would be cast out of his inner life, and floated away in the cold and mighty drift of his indifference. She was strongly attracted to him, but she did not trust him, and so when the time was up she had decided the case against him. As he turned his back to her, with his strong, positive face and dark figure sharply silhouetted against the light of the sunlit window, there rose in her consciousness the least impulse of pride, in consideration of so brave a conquest, instantly condemned and atoned for by the gentle speech with which she sought to forget the injury he had done her, and to soften the pain of his cruel disappointment.

"Mr. King, I should find it very hard to forgive you for having decoyed me into this interview so dangerous to my appearance of virtue, only I do believe that you have conferred upon me the honor of—" she hesitated to name that love which seemed to her like

a forced plant in the hotbed of the man's passionate nature.

"Judith, may I come and sit on the arm of the chair, a little nearer to you, my dear, while I talk?" He laid his arm across the back of the chair as he spoke, looking down upon her with eyes whose imploring passion spoke volumes for the restraint of his will.

"No! No! Mr. King," she interrupted hastily, "I want to say to you at once and forever, you can be nothing to me, unless you chose to accept my friendship for what it may be worth to you. There is no excuse for your present conduct; it is in every way mean and dishonorable, and destroys at once all respect I might feel for your attentions."

"Judith, I am struggling to win you; do not compel me to act as a master of your fate, where I seek only to petition as a slave."

"Will you allow me to return to the city, and think about this matter for a few days. You can hope for nothing favorable from me because of this involuntary detention." She spoke haughtily. He stepped back a pace or two looking down upon her with an expression of cruel triumph.

"You must stay here until madame returns, as she has the key in her pocket. I knew too well the softness of my heart for you, when I allowed her to make me a voluntary prisoner."

"What madness!" she burst forth, but he went on without noticing the remark:

"Madame will not return until eight o'clock this evening, Judith, if you wish to leave me then, I shall not longer seek to detain you, but by that time, I shall have conquered your repugnance to me, that little repugnance born of a bad prejudice, which has always operated against the tender claim of your heart pulling you my way."

As the fearful significance of his words became apparent to her, she sprang from the chair, and stood with her hands clasped against her beating heart, her face blanched white with desperation, her eyes fixed upon him with that piteous accusing stare that Anne Boleyn must have bestowed upon her executioner.

"You call that love!" she gasped, "to deliberately plan to ruin me, and to drag my reproachless character in the dust?"

"I call it love, Judith, because the desire to possess you is all my life and a part of your's already. I have read some things in your face ere this, that belies your lips, whenever you deny my claim upon your feelings. I call it wisdom when a general plans a campaign to make his calculations for victory, not for defeat, and I believe all is generally conceded to be fair, both in love and war. That you may understand how determined I am to win you, I will tell you that I have deliberately planned to compromise you, so that your only chance of escape from calumny is to become my wife. If I have played the villain for once in my life, it was for no more unworthy purpose than to compel a haughty and beautiful girl to acknowledge I am far from being the worst man in the world in her estimation, and that she could love me."

Several times he had essayed to approach her nearer as he made this deliberate statement, but she had put up her hands in an action of such piteous self-defence, that he continued to maintain his cold and masterful attitude toward her.

"My God! what is love?" she cried in helpless agony of mind, as she shrank back in the chair covering her face with her hands.

"Love is a pretty English word, my dear, that signifies all that makes life worth living." She did not raise her head, and he could see by the heaving of

her bosom, her agitation was about to express itself in tears.

"Love is the property of Heaven." He continued more earnestly, "Man found a ladder one day high enough to reach the stars, and so borrowed a little of the light which illumines a universe to brighten his own dreary existence. My darling, look at me: Do not I implore you, make the battle I have won, so bitter in surrender." He flung himself upon his knees, dragging her hands away from her wet face. But she wrenched herself away from him, her eyes flashing scorn through her tears. "You so dare to profane that which is holy, which should shine like a star to be reached by climbing Godward, but which in your heart burns like a tormenting fire, and makes appeal to the lower half of nature." In her indignation she rose once more, retreating to the other side of the room, where she remained standing near the head of a couch. He followed her persistently, when she drew her hat pin, the only instrument she could command with which to defend herself from the look of fixed intention with which he regarded her.

"If you will use brutality, John King, to follow fine speeches," she continued in withering scorn, "I will match it so far as I can with a hat pin. Do not dare to touch me."

The color of courage flashed suddenly back into her face, her cheeks burned, her eyes flashed with wrath; never had she in her life before an occasion for such just anger. Before she could judge how it was done, he had seized her upraised arm, wrenched the pin from her fingers, and thrown it across the floor.

"Did you think, Judith, after having once murdered me with your sweet eyes you could kill me over again with so humble an instrument as a bodkin? Forgive me, Judith dear! I do not wish to ap-

pear brutal where every thought and emotion toward you constrain me to act otherwise. But I think you would respect me even less if I allowed you to conquer me at this desperate issue between us, much less than you would if I convinced you, as I shall, little woman, that I am still John King, and your manager." He continued to hold her wrist imprisoned, while looking steadily into her face, which betrayed to his searching inquiry a variety of rapidly coming-ling emotions, but never that look of real aversion he knew that a woman less softly inclined to him than Judith was, must have experienced.

"What condition can I make with a man who is not to be trusted, except what he deserves—to despise him."

"How gladly you would despise me, Judith, if you could." He smiled back at her. "You would consider it virtuous, honest, just, to do so. But you cannot. Shall I tell you why? Shall I act as an interpreter to all that is sweet and willing within you, which tells you how warm a place I can give you against the world's frowns and chills; that I will be your soldier and shield in the battle of life, that I can go to the fight with fresh courage, if I have anything worth battling for. But I cannot, Judith, I cannot fight alone."

"You have so far taken advantage of my confidence in the beginning as to drag me down, and now you make appeal to emotions that causes me to blush for the frailty of my body. I do not believe this is love, it is something I hesitate to name, it is the strong undertow in the current, that has made the wreck and disaster of human life. Be merciful to me and let me go."

Still pleading with her he raised one of her thin white hands, pressing it warmly between his own. Suddenly he sat down upon the couch, flinging his

arms about her waist and shoulders as he drew her down upon his knees almost crushing her against himself. His embrace, so bearish in its strength and intense in its action, was like the sudden sharp stroke of a bow upon a weak string. It left her in suspense and broken in his arms. Yet there was no beating in the slender, round body of the girl, to answer the wild throbbing of his own strong man's heart. As he looked upon his gentle victim lying with her head thrown back against his shoulder, the beauty of the helpless woman, the ecstasy of every even breath which brought the soft line of her unprotected bosom against his own destroyed in him the last vestige of remorse by driving him to the ecstasy of complete intoxication.

"Judith, speak to me," he implored, "one word—yield a little and yielding will become easy."

"I have to choose between the higher and the lower life," she replied in a breathless whisper, as she turned her face, until the bright waves of her hair brushed his cheek. Although he could not see beneath the white seal of her closed eyelids, what emotions were stirring in her woman's breast, yet he began to realize that if she fully despised him she would not remain thus passive. The truth began to dawn upon him that she was shocked but not indifferent, and from this point his mind took rapid account of the impressions produced upon him by her splendid power as an actress, to represent those emotions which he now so ardently desired the present moment should realize for them both. The whole power of feeling revived in him, as he laid his heavy head upon her bosom.

"Judith, my love ! your lips are silent," he said, "but I will listen for the confession of your heart." The sound of his rich, deep voice speaking against her thus, the passionate breath in his bosom that fol-

lowed this speech, the eager searching of the lips which found her own and clung to them with repeated caresses and entreaty, the delicate odor of the waxed moustache brushing her nostrils, the mad complaint of his heart, and the strong strain of his arms, caused her to awaken to the significance of his appeal, trembling with terror that was not unmixed with a strange delight in this extravagant expression of his emotion.

"Judith, Judith, dear little woman ——"

"Let me go !" she implored.

"I cannot let you go, you must forgive me and pity me, even now when I seem to be so cruel to you. Say just once that you love me, that you will be my wife."

"Release me, I pray you," she pleaded with him. "You have murdered virtue in me by a power which you so mercilessly exercise."

"You love me ?" he still persisted. "You must confess it." His eyes sought her face burning with the light of insanity, his lips, as sweet as a flower, were repeatedly pressed against her cheek, her hair, her brow, in an almost piteous entreaty for this single confession. She tried to push him away with her cold hands, she looked upon him sternly and reprov- ingly as she replied :

"It is useless ! I have learned to judge men by their deeds rather than by their speech, by my knowledge of them rather than my impression, and I cannot ——"

"Judith, Judith, I am very unhappy ! I am ruined ! I am undone ! except for my hope with you ——"

"I cannot !" she went on, with dry lips and heaving bosom, "I cannot say I love you when I do not even respect you."

This falsehood cost her her composure. She fell into a fit of frantic weeping, as she made the declara-

tion. He sat up suddenly with a cold chill running through every fibre of his frame, and freezing his wan face into a white stillness of sudden pain.

"Are you telling me the truth?" he inquired, as he drew away from her, his voice low and husky. She threw herself prone upon the couch, shaken from head to foot by her tears, her dress and hair disheveled.

"The truth!" she affirmed brokenly. He now arose and stood for some moments looking down upon her in stern silence, his arms folded tightly across his breast, one foot pushed forward like a man who advances to meet a challenge, his chin resting upon his bosom.

"You lied to me then, Judith, that day when you said you wished to be good to me?" His blue eyes burned with scornful wrath.

"I took no reckoning of my words, King, you construed them too seriously."

"If I did not love you, Judith Kent," he answered, bitterly, "I could curse you. You see I offer a contrast of loving, whom I cannot respect."

She put up her hands against her ears. "You! John King! You dare to upbraid me for being innocently guilty?"

"As paradoxical as your inconsistent sex are won't to be," was his sarcastic comment. "Let that pass; if you do not marry me from love, Judith, still I choose that you shall marry me just the same." He began to pace the floor, literally flinging this short, sharp speech down upon the weeping girl as he excitedly passed her to and fro.

"I have so managed to compromise you, that there is no other honorable escape for you. By to-morrow morning it will be well known in theatrical circles, and so by the way of scandal reach the public ear that you have passed the night with me in this place."

"I have the alternative of conscious innocence," she replied, rising and looking at him reproachfully through her tears. "I cannot be constrained against my will to marry you, King, and I will never do it."

He wheeled about in angry astonishment, "What? Would you run the gauntlet of all the goose quills that will be set to scribbling about you before to-morrow's sun goes down?"

Once more a fierce light of passion and color leaped like a flame into his set, white face as he turned toward her, stretching out his arms. "Give me one moment of real happiness, Judith, in this dreary world. To me the close, particular love of some good woman is so essential, it is Heaven to enjoy it, and Hell to be denied. I know how delicate a fabric is a woman's reputation, my dear, I shall not allow you to ruin yourself that way."

"It is a strange way to show affection by heaping misery upon the beloved object," she responded, matching his determination with scorn.

"I do not wish to heap misery upon you ; Judith, in spite of what you say to me, I know that you do love me, I have known it for a long time. See," he went on playfully, "I abdicate in your favor, no longer am I King and master, but subject and slave, rule me as you will, my sweet liege lady, except not to love you, that is impossible. I will serve you in any capacity except that of indifference or hate."

"Then liberate me," she demanded with the spirit of the actress coming into her face and action, as she pointed to the locked door. At that moment a clock in some part of the house struck eight ; at this reminder of the passage of time and her obduracy, all the old dominant spirit returned. He turned almost fiercely upon her ; seizing both hands, he whirled her so suddenly about as to bring her to face him, startled and breathless. Before she could anticipate what he

would do, he had raised her in his arms, carrying her across the room, once again seating her upon the couch. "Release you, never by God! I will ruin you soul and body first!" She gave a little sharp cry of distress as he spoke, and at that moment some one was heard ascending the stairs.

"Hush!" he commanded. "If I thought you hated me, Judith, I would spare you; or if you would give me your word of honor to bind yourself to marry me, I would release you now. You do not hate me, I know it, and the knowledge that you have loved me from the first has driven me after you with an unspent force of passionate desire for eighteen months like a whipped dog. Perhaps I am mad, I think I am, but it is that sort of madness which must be appeased."

White, trembling, with prayerful despair in her face, she looked up at his set lips and flashing eyes, feeling compelled by the deadly fascination of his will; still the steps continued to ascend the stairs, and as he held her forcibly upon the couch, he turned his frowning face to listen. At that moment a hand was laid upon the door. It was evident that the woman had returned with a companion and was about to enter the room. A loud and peremptory knock followed these sounds, while a man's voice inquired:

"Is John King in this room?"

Judith, who recognized the tones of Savelli's voice, threw herself forward with a shriek of joy, then shrank back upon the couch, where she lay like a crushed lily, unheeding the demand without. John King knelt beside her, his cheek pressed against her cold white face, as he cursed and implored in a breath:

"Promise me, Judith! and I will spare you, but even at this moment, late as it is, unless you promise

me, I swear to you, I will not spare you even in appearance."

He was, as he said, driven mad with desperation. She was as a bird snared and crippled in the net of the fowler. She had neither the strength of body or spirit to any longer repel or answer him. The room was dark except for the fitful light of the fire, which now suddenly blazed up around the mulled log, with the last glow of expiring light. King rose, taking some matches from a little safe on the mantel, he lighted one jet of the chandelier. The rapping still continued without, followed by more peremptory inquiries.

"Is John King here?"

He paused in the centre of the floor with one hand pressed against his frowning brow, he glanced first at the door, and then at the senseless girl upon the couch. He walked softly across the polished floor to assure himself as to her exact condition. Had she fallen asleep from a complete collapse of nervous energy in her excitable temperament, or had the sharp strain of his passion broken all the tender strings that linked the woman's soul to her delicate body?

"Promise! promise!" he raved under his breath, and even as he did so the door was unlocked, thrown open, and Alessandro Savelli entered the room, where for a moment he stood dumfounded, gazing at the compromising situation of the girl. King sprang to his feet, pointing to the couch:

"She is mine, Savelli," he said haughtily, "she is mine, you have no business in this room. I never troubled myself about your intrigues with Miss Winter." Without one word of reply the young actor walked deliberately across the room, and drawing off his glove dealt King a stinging blow in the face.

"I express my belief in your dishonor, and in this

girl's innocence, John King, according to the custom of the brave men of my country, and I am willing to vindicate the statement I have made by either my blood or yours."

A rapid change was observable in King's features, as he bowed before Alessandro with sardonic politeness. "I am not angry, Sandro," he said, "I have not thought of so simple a solution of my troubles, God grant that it may be my blood; women have ruined me."

With this statement he nonchalantly crossed the hall, and taking from the wall a pair of swords he passed them to Savelli, coolly remarking as he did so, "They are the pair we practised with in Italy." Savelli examined them a moment, and returned one to King's hand without deigning a reply, whereupon they stepped into the deserted garden, to take their position as deadly enemies, who had so long been intimate friends. The moon looked peacefully down from the serene star-bespangled blue, the flowers breathed their fragrance to the velvet dusk of the evening air, and there was a soft lispng rustle among the leaves above and around them in the thick garden foliage.

King's servant, wholly confused, rushed from the couch to the window and from the window returned to the couch again, uncertain as to what all this strange behavior might signify. Moaning and weeping, she raised Judith, chafing her hands and forcing a few mouthfuls of wine between her lips, while she passionately implored her to speak, and to arouse herself to some conscious action. She kept pouring the tragic statements into the insensible ears of the girl. "I do not know what they are doing, but I believe they be fighting with them long knives. Ah, my God! I shall be in the police court for their doings, to-morrow," With this fear possessing her

mind she would run back to the window, pressing her face to the glass, as huddled among the plants she strained her gaze through the dusky pane in order to get a glimpse of the terrible scene without.

All at once feeling appeared to desert King; he was masterly, pale, cold, mechanical, all eyes and nerves of steel. Yet he did not seek to attack the man before him, but to defend himself from an experienced swordsman. As they each stood with one foot pushed forward and their shoulders braced back squarely, their features expressive of cruel determination, perhaps King hoped that a little prick from Alessandro's sword would satisfy his honor and cool his temper; but unluckily, the young actor's foot slipped upon a rolling pebble in such a way as to throw him upon his adversary's blade. As the sword entered his chest, King, with a cry of horror, dropped his weapon and threw his arms about the tottering figure of Alessandro.

"My God, Sandro! what have I done?"

"It is all up, old boy," said the young actor, sitting down half fainting upon the balcony steps. "We both loved her and have both lost."

King hastened to bind up the wound and to support the heavy figure of the young actor in his arms as he guided him into the house and lay him upon his own bed. As he bent over the half fainting man he said again: "My God, Sandro! what a night this is and what a morning!"

"You had better leave the country, King; if I die it will be bad work for you both. Quick, I have not much strength."

"Sandro, can you forgive me? I am a very unhappy man." The dying actor looked into the white, agonized countenance of his former friend.

"For my own injuries, but not for hers," he replied,

and closed his eyes. Bidding Hannah do for him what she could, King hurried from the house, rushed to the stables, woke the sleeping groom, got a horse saddled, leaped upon it, and rode madly to the nearest physician.

"Do not stop one moment!" he said. "Here, take my horse, and ride back for your life to Maple Terraces. Alessandro Savelli lays at my house wounded and perhaps dying. I will follow on foot." The physician upon hearing the name of his distinguished patient hastened to obey, while John King pursued the opposite direction. In the solemn urgency of the present moment he felt bewildered, and had to keep a sort of clutching remembrance of the scene he had left behind him. He saw no possible way to avoid arrest, unless he could disguise himself and fly the country. He had a reckless and brave contempt of flying from anything, but then it was not a pleasant prospect, that of being arraigned in the common courts, where thousands would flock to stare at him. He returned to New York and his room at the hotel, where he commenced to pace the floor, struggling to calmly overlook the alarming situation in which he was placed. Most men in King's position would have broken down completely, but he neither wept nor raved. Perjured, abandoned, ambition blasted, genius wasted, "I have alienated myself," he thought, "from the tenderest woman heart that ever beat; I have murdered my noblest friend." Life seemed in this gloomy hour of retrospection like a continually widening series of revolutions—increasing in intensity and velocity with each year's experience. He was giddy with the whirl of meaningless things, meaningless to him only because he had not hitherto paused to consider his accountability or proper relation to events, nor to define aught that touched his impressions, except by the clutch of selfish desire. At last the

majesty of the eternal spoke through the mother's blood, when his passions, struck by disaster, retiring their cowardly impulse, left reason and conscience in review of the barren fields of defeat to convict him of wilful self-ruin.

He threw a few handkerchiefs and a change of linen into a hand satchel, after which donning his coat and hat, he took a car down town and set out on the midnight train for his old home at H——. Before that thing happened which seemed so imminent and yet so far away, he wished once more to look upon his father's and mother's grave. He arrived the next day about one o'clock. It was a mile through the pleasant village, with its church upon the low step of one of the rising mountains over which he would have to walk to his father's house. He strolled along the pleasant village street beneath the line of elms that decorated each side of it. The open country stretched up in a series of rising hills, granite capped or wood crowned to the snowy peaks of the white mountains. The green fields and pastures surrounding the modest white cottages were filled with fruit trees, whose pink blossoms, scattered over the plushy green of the earth's new spring carpet, were caught by the stirring and capricious airs of May, to be whirled like a discarded bridal veil to his very feet by the dusty roadside. The breath of all the healthful, blooming beauty of the earth, was exhaled on the invigorating air, beating upon the pale, moist brow, and dry lips of the sick man. Suddenly from a quiet side street a funeral procession came slowly forth, to wend its way up the hill before him. The hearse and one carriage, were followed by many people on foot, who appeared to issue forth from every doorway that he passed. Simultaneously with the appearance of this solemn pantomime of sorrow was heard the tolling of the bell. He shivered, as he stepped mechanically

into the line of people entering the church door. He felt himself more related to that which laid cold and still in its coffin, than to the smiling sweetness of life, and hope, and beauty, in the outer world. The service had commenced as he dropped wearily into a seat near the door. A woman was being eulogized for those graces of mind and heart which are the practical possessions of an exemplary Christianity. As he sat listening, with pain in his breast and confusion in his head, faint and overcome by the impressions of the scene and the hour, he buried his face in his hands, his reeling senses seemed to stagger out of his cold body, and leave it a lonely case upon which he could gaze as a thing separate from himself. At length two mourners had entered their single carriage in its attendance upon the hearse, and the audience were respectfully requested to look upon the dead. Still without any particular impetus of his worn will he followed, mechanically approaching that last cradle in which humanity is rocked to eternal sleep, or ushered into everlasting glory, where it sat embowered in ascension lilies at the foot of the chancel. As his eyes came to rest upon the figure in the casket, he started back with a cry of astonishment ; then bent eagerly forward, trembling like an aspen, horrified, fascinated. He stared wildly down upon the calm, beautiful repose of the dead face of his cousin, Alice Beecham. Once more he started back ; clasping his hands to his head, he looked appealingly into the face of the rector standing upon the chancel steps. In response to the awful expression of misery stamped like a mark of death upon the strong young face, the rector came gently forward, speaking slowly. " His mercy is without end, and his love is everlasting," he said.

It was evident the tragic mourner he addressed did not hear him. Thick clouds were about him, and

darkness made his pavilion. Upon that cold, still bosom whose passion he had made responsible for his own madness, lay the black cross stamped with its shining gold letters I. H. S.

"I have suffered."

He did not see the awe struck and wondering faces of strangers grouped about him; the proud, cold masterful man heard nothing, knew nothing, but the crowning anguish as he threw himself with a despairing cry across the dead body of his cousin.

"Oh Alice! Alice! it is dark," he sobbed, "we have erred and strayed from thy ways."

The great tempest which racked his body suddenly subsided, and the living man stretched across the coffin lay so strangely still the rector ventured to touch him gently upon the shoulder. As he did so the body of the man slipped down and lay out stretched at the foot of the chancel steps.

Cries of horror, tremblings of fear and distress, and the labor of the sympathetic hands of strangers could not restore ever again light and warmth to the strong managing brow, the flashing eyes, and the stern white face. John King was dead.

Human life at the greatest and best is but a wayward child. Why should we see a vindictive application of God's wrath in the suffering which accrues through misdirected ways. The sharpest judgment that can fall upon any soul is that self-conviction which leads it to recognize an all pervading good in the universe, an all pervading love, an all pervading harmony that has been violated in our own blind existence. In that moment we have grown lucid, the light penetrates the shadows, our lives become spiritualized and rise toward the infinite perfection we have been called to recognize by the corrected methods of suffering.

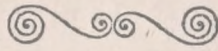
Let us leave John King with his God.

It is morning at New Rochelle; it seems to the interesting convalescent, who lies lazily swaying in a hammock beneath the garden trees, it is morning in the whole world. Madame De Sequeria is in attendance upon one side with a fan, and our lady Judith upon the other with a book; not the less interesting to him, the adored invalid, is the picturesque girl at his side because her face is paler and sadder than he has ever seen it before. Her life has known a sorrow, poor child, which has invested her with a sacred charm in the eyes of her romantic lover. She reads to him in a clear, sweet voice, with a tremulous quality in her tone that pleases his fastidious ear. She sits in the midst of singing birds and fluttering leaves, while the air is full of the fragrance of the garden flowers; she is a poem and a picture, upon which his eyes rest in longing, loving radiance, and to which she occasionally responds by a half tender and pathetic glance. Her bright hair dropping in shining waves about her face is flecked with the sun shot through the shadow of the moving leaves. To-morrow they will sail home across the sea to that wonderful Italian villa set among the lemon trees. Savelli will never stand before an audience again. His defence of a woman's honor has cost him his life's great ambition; he is condemned to seclusion, and the world has lost one of its brightest lights. Perhaps it is a small reward for all this costly sacrifice if his gentle nurse shall give him a life attendance, but he is more than satisfied.

THE END.

MAY AGNES FLEMING'S

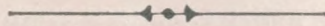
Popular Novels.



The following is a list of the Novels by the Author of
"GUY EARLSCOURT'S WIFE":

SILENT AND TRUE.	CARRIED BY STORM.
A WONDERFUL WOMAN.	LOST FOR A WOMAN.
A TERRIBLE SECRET.	A WIFE'S TRAGEDY.
NORINE'S REVENGE.	A CHANGED HEART.
A MAD MARRIAGE.	PRIDE AND PASSION.
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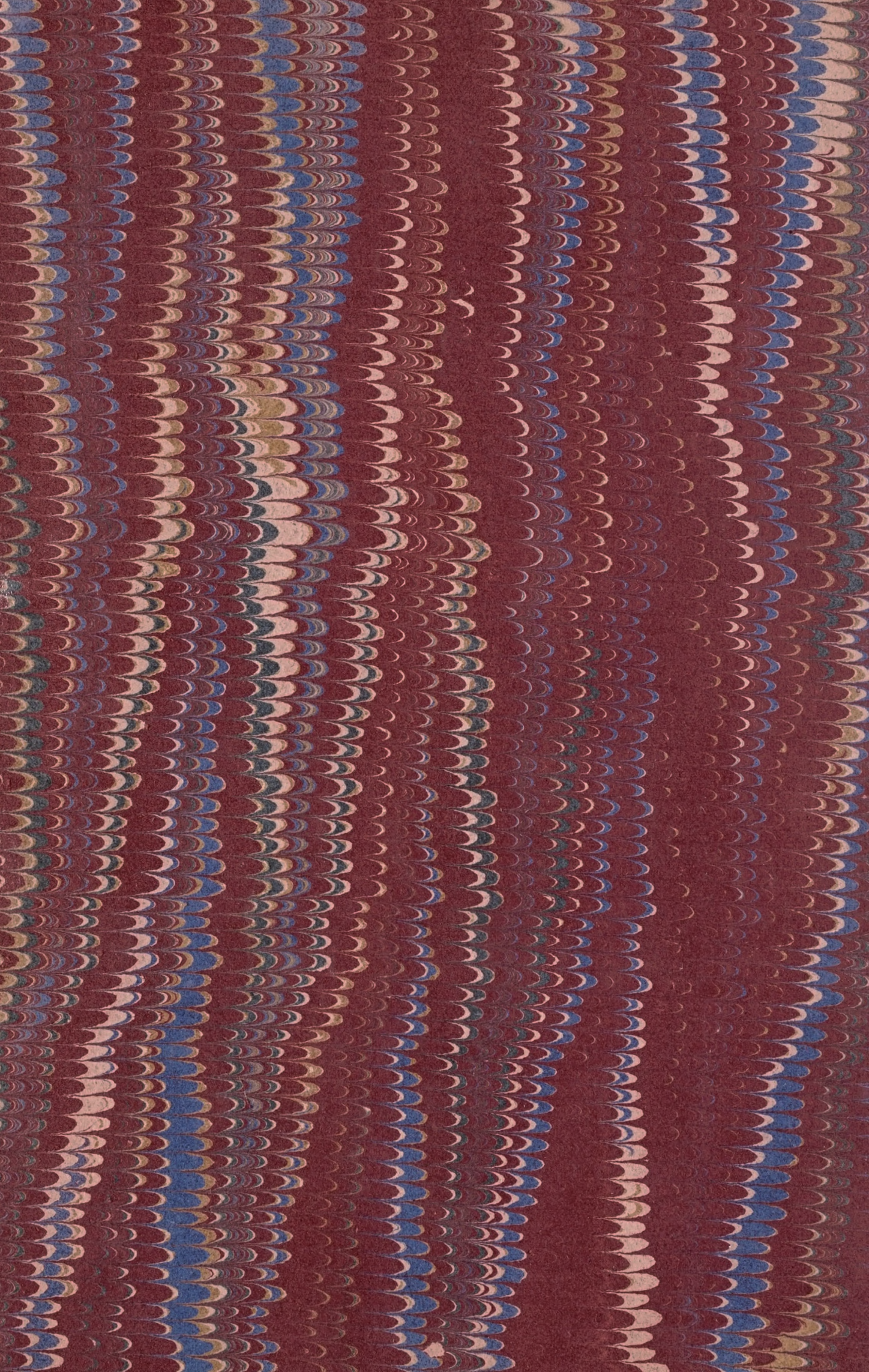
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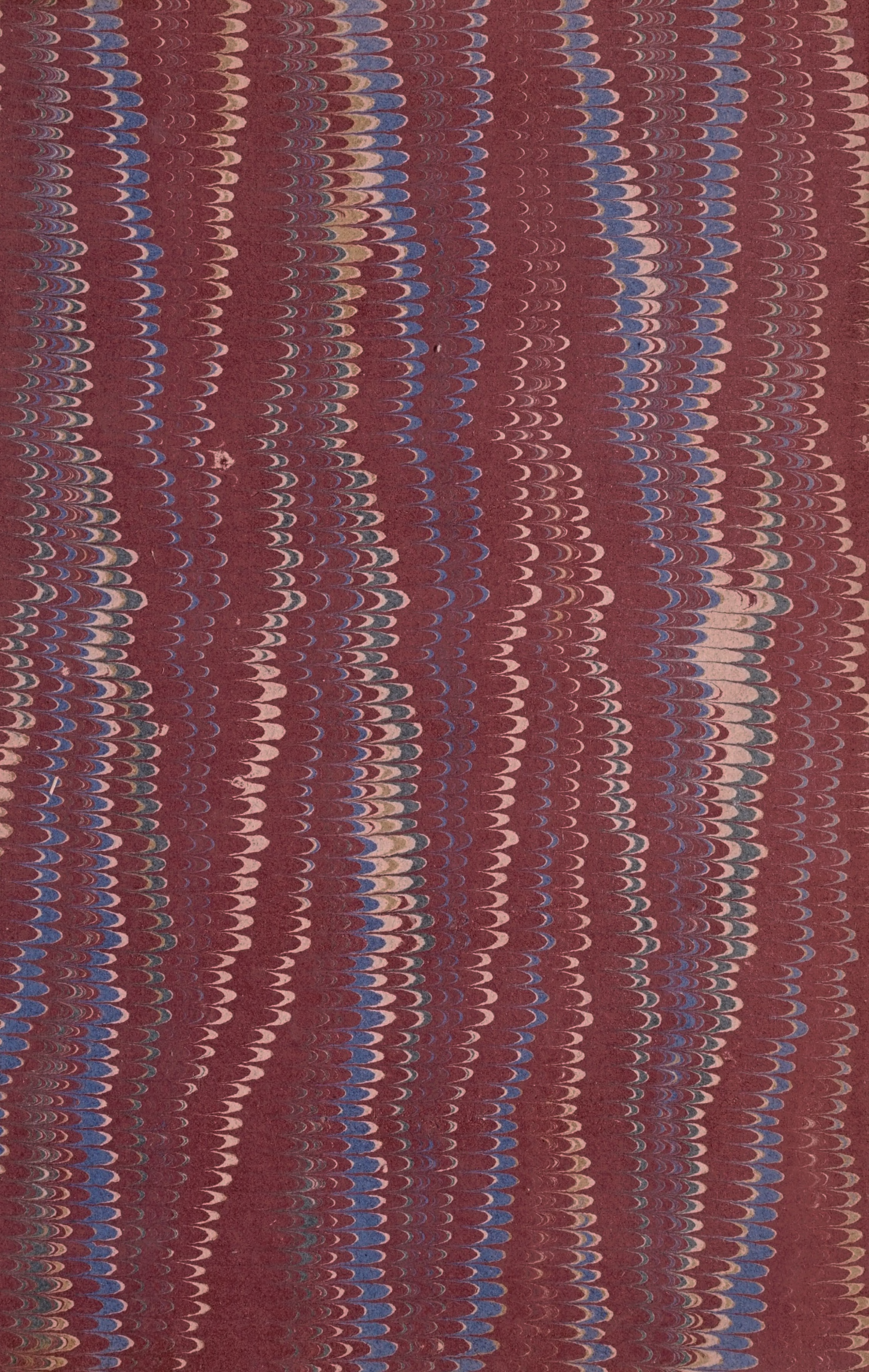
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